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ABSTRACT

The study attempts to redefine the objectives of Asian development in terms of rapid social change and the redistribution of political power to the rural masses via collectivism. Part I, "The Perspective", describes the largely "anti" rural development experiences of four Asian countries (India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China) in the past quarter century. This reveals certain development directions and principles which are then systemetized into a theory of rural development in the Asian context based on social redirection and transformation, institution building, and a new organizational structure of society founded on mass-rooted leadership and collectivist accumulation. Part II, "Micro-level Development: Design and Evaluation of Rural Development Projects", explores the contradictions of the reality of rural development projects in the study of projects in three Asian villages: Sultanpur, India; the Comilla Experiment in Bangladesh; and the Rural Reconstruction Project in the district of Sankhaburi, Thailand. Propositions which emerge regarding evaluative criteria are applied to the experience of a South Korea village participating in the Saemul Movement. Finally, considerations for the design and evaluation of rural development projects are presented. (SB)

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Towards a Theory of Rural Development

By Wahidul Haque, Niranjan Mehta, Anisur Rahman and Ponna Wignaraja

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Another Development and Collective Creativity

The 1975 Dag Hammarskjöld Project on Development and International Cooperation was a determined effort to launch the ideas of what is now being increasingly recognized as Another Development, which is required in all societies, be it in the North or the South or in centrally planned or market dominated economies. As stated in the Dag Hammarskjöld Report, *What Now: Another Development* (DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE 1975:1/2), Another Development would be *need-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound* and based on the *transformation of social structures*. In delineating these characteristics, it was emphasized that, though human needs are both material and non-material, the basic needs of food, health, shelter and education, should be satisfied on a priority basis. It was further emphasized that development, being endogenous and self-reliant, should stem from the heart of each society, and that it would acquire its full meaning only if rooted at the local level and in the praxis of each community. This, in turn, means that no development model can be universal and that the richness of development consists in the plurality of its patterns.

A precondition for the achievement of these goals is, however, a structural transformation of most societies. Only if such transformations are brought about can self-management and participation in decision-making by all those affected become a reality and thus lay the foundation of true human development.

An attempt to illustrate the conceptual approach outlined above was made in the Dag Hammarskjöld Report by providing two case studies, one on 'Another Sweden' and one on 'Self-reliance and Ujamaa: Tanzania's Development Strategy'. A much more comprehensive effort is, however, represented by the contributions collected in the final volume to arise out of the Dag Hammarskjöld Project, *Another Development: Approaches and Strategies*, edited by Marc Nerfin and recently published by the Foundation. This book is divided into two parts. The first elaborates further the conceptual framework on which the ideas of Another Development is based. The second contains a series of detailed case studies on Brazil, Mexico, India, Chile and Tunisia, emphasizing the need for a transformation of existing social structures in the attempts to implement the strategies of transition to Another Development.

In the work on the Dag Hammarskjöld Project, the problems of Asia and especially the problems of the rural masses of the Indian subcontinent always loomed large, but it was, for different reasons, not possible to document these problems adequately in the short time available. Material from Latin America, Africa and the industrialized countries predominated in the project, which was regrettable in view of the fact that the need for Another Development is very pressing in Asia.

However, parallel to the work on the Dag Hammarskjöld Project, four

Asian scholars connected with the United Nations Asian Development Institute in Bangkok (UNADI) had formed a team to study an alternative strategy of rural development for Asia. They had done so, as they had become convinced—reflecting on the positive and negative aspects of the post-war decades—that a fundamentally different framework was needed, beginning with the definition and objectives of development itself. As a result of their inquiries, they had arrived independently at concepts and conclusions rather similar to those developed in the course of the Dag Hammarskjöld Project.

The work of the Asian group has, to date, resulted in the publication in mimeographed form by UNADI of two studies, *Towards a Theory of Rural Development (1975)* and *Micro-level Development: Design and Evaluation of Rural Development Projects* (1977). One team member, Ponna Wignaraja of UNADI, was asked to highlight some of the main features of the two studies in the last issue of DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE (1977:1). His article has aroused so much interest that we have now decided to make both studies available in this issue of the journal. In addition, it should be mentioned that these two studies are unique examples of how the main ideas characteristic of Another Development can be perceived at the village level and used operationally to initiate and further such a development. Another important aspect of the work of the Asian team should be stressed in this context. The whole methodology of the team is based on the idea that there should be a constant interplay between theory and practice, that every theoretical insight should be tested in the field and the result of the testing fed back to enrich the theory.

The authors of these two studies have widely different backgrounds. Wahidul Haque (Bangladesh) is a Professor of Mathematics and Economics at the University of Toronto, Niranjan Mehta (India) is connected with the National Institute of Bank Management, Bombay, Anisur Rahman (Bangladesh) serves with the Rural Employment Policies Branch of ILO in Geneva and Ponna Wignaraja (Sri Lanka) is a Faculty Member of the United Nations Asian Development Institute. Although based in different continents, the four team members have been in a position to meet for intense interaction over long periods both in the field and on more academic occasions and they are continuing to do so.

The two studies that follow and that form the bulk of the journal are also interesting from another point of view, namely, as examples of efforts towards what may be called *collective creativity*. It may, in fact, be that Another Development requires another methodology and that one of the most important aspects of this methodology is collective creativity. Attempts to engage in such creativity are, however, not without problems. One of the problems stems from the fact that collective creativity seems to go

against the very ethos of the academic tradition of the West, with its many ramifications in other parts of the world. This tradition, in turn, reflects the hierarchical organization of society in general, emphasizing individual performance and success and suppressing collectivist orientations. It is therefore not necessary to stress in particular that also people who are engaged in development thinking are products of this tradition and that their writings reflect this fact (which is not to say that they are therefore bad). Collective creativity is, however, a complicated matter; it presupposes that one abandons the prevailing non-collectivist orientation and learns new ways of perceiving and functioning. Most people would probably agree that this may be desirable, but it is doubtful if they comprehend fully what is intended. Collective creativity—like true interdiscipline—is not just a matter of simple addition, where a group of creative people are brought together and the inputs are added in a minicomputer fashion with a radiant grand total as a result.

Collective creativity is something much more profound and it can only function if the members of the group are able to enter into a process of collective reflection. This is not as easy as it may sound since the members more often than not enter the process with divided minds. Thus, while they may be sincerely devoted to the idea of shared experience and collective creativity, most of their reactions and reflexes are conditioned by the individualistic model, which means that the main interest is in getting others to listen to and accept what 'I' say rather than to create something together. It should, however, be added that the difficulties and failures encountered here are not primarily a psychological phenomenon. They are part of a *cultural* phenomenon; the approach is so new that there is consequent lack of experience in problem-*indentification* and problem-*solving*.

One of the significant features of collective creativity is that it makes for the *change*, *interchange* and—in some exceptional cases—*integration* or *synthesis* of *perspectives*. By promoting this process of changing and interchanging perspectives, collective creativity may also enhance our understanding of available alternatives and hence increase our possibilities of acting. But it should be emphasized that it *can* promote such a process; it does not necessarily do so. For the foreseeable future, things being what they are, there will be a need for both the traditional forms of individual creativity and for the new type of collective creativity exemplified in such an extraordinary way by the two studies published in this issue of DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE.

The need for a continuing exchange of experiences and interchange of perspectives between various groups engaged in the struggle for Another Development is becoming more and more evident. In addition to the work of the Asian scholars presented in this issue and now followed up by them

in various field studies in Bangladesh, Burma and Sri Lanka, other organizations have undertaken or are undertaking similar studies in Africa and Latin America as well as in the industrialized countries. A sustained effort has been made in Africa over the last few years under the joint asupices of the United Nations Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and UNITAR, resulting in a series of alternative scenarios for self-reliant development in Africa. In Latin America, a team sponsored by the Bariloche Foundation has developed a Latin American World Model, while a series of studies of various aspects of Another Development in individual Latin American countries, especially in the field of information, is being undertaken at the Latin American Institute of Transnational Studies (ILET) in Mexico. Finally, the International Foundation for Development Alternatives (IFDA) in Geneva is embarking on a number of similar investigations as a contribution to the development strategy for the 1980s and beyond. These groups—and several others—are working towards the same aim, the concretization of a conceptual framework for Another Development; informal discussions between representatives of the groups mentioned above have also been organized during the past year by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation with the support of UNCTAD and SAREC. These discussions have provided continuing opportunities for the exchange of experiences and the interchange of perspectives and operational methodologies. It is hoped that they will—by a process of collective creativity—result in the formulation, on the global level, of a perspective and a system of evaluation as challenging and well documented as the two studies published in the issue of DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE.

The Perspective

This study seeks to understand how the creative initiative of the people of rural Asia may be released and mobilized for the all-round development of their lives.

The concept of development is presented in this study in terms of fundamental humanistic values rather than narrower techno-economic notions of development. The core of this concept is the de-alienation of man vis-à-vis the material forces of production and society, and a purposeful growth of human personality. Such humanistic philosophy has often been considered at the subjective level, but its historical validity is becoming increasingly apparent. For one thing, disillusionment with the quality of life in today's economically advanced societies is growing among their own peoples, and this growing alienation can be traced to the specific nature of their accumulation process and the social relations on which it has rested. For another thing, the developing nations of today are confronted by a world-historical framework in which the ideological driving force for accumulation, pertaining to the economically advanced societies, no longer offers a viable road to accumulation itself for the former. The compulsion for seeking alternative driving forces for accumulation, even in its narrower conception, is therefore mounting.

Not all poor societies of Asia in this sense are at the same stage of historical development. The compulsion suggested above came earliest in China. It has matured in a number of other Asian countries where the process of redirection of social effort has also started. The interaction between internal developments and geo-political constellations places the other countries into various stages in this evolution, including some in which the contradictions have so intensified that the collapse of the old order has come within the realm of possibility. Specially fortuitous situations or developments (e.g. the discovery of natural resources, the inflow of massive external assistance) may for individual countries make an exception to this trend—but the broad sweep of history remains.

It seems appropriate, therefore, that an attempt should be made to understand the character of the new driving force for economic and social change which seems to be emerging in Asia, albeit at different paces in different countries, and which seems to offer real possibilities of progress both in

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material and in human terms. The present study is but a modest step in this direction.

Attention has been focused in this study on the process of human mobilization, as this must be the primary mechanism for accumulation in the general Asian context. The study is not comprehensive in that questions like the interdependence between the rural and non-rural sectors and foreign trade have not been discussed.

The specific empirical basis of the study is provided by historical developments in the rural scene in four countries—India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and China. The first three have been chosen because of the authors' personal familiarity with them; the choice of China has been motivated by a desire to understand, admittedly from secondary sources, the essence of its thrust towards social transformation. Insights have been sought from these experiences as to processes that may promote or hinder development as conceived above. These insights have then been systematized into what may be seen as the beginning of a theory of rural development in the Asian context, and for that matter a theory of development for the predominantly rural Asian countries.

Introduction

A Quarter Century of (Anti-) Rural Development

The model

Asia is predominantly a rural society. And yet, a quarter century ago, when the Asian countries emerged as politically independent nations from centuries of colonial rule, they adopted a development model which was indifferent if not inimical to rural development. Support for this model, which essentially permitted continuation of existing international economic relationships, came from two external sources—the developed countries of the West and the developed centrally planned countries.

The model chosen had in principle three major components:

1. Central planning, control and coordination of the economy as a top-down process.
2. Industrialization and expansion of the modern sector as a means of rapid economic growth and 'take-off'.
3. Assistance from developed countries to bridge the savings or foreign exchange gap, whichever was dominant, and transfer of international technology.

It was assumed that the benefits of development of the modern sector would trickle-down and, as the economy moved towards take-off, the rural sector would be carried on the back of the urban industrial sector. Meanwhile, the approach required of the tradition-bound peasantry only marginal modernization and the provision of food and raw materials for the modern sector. Occasional voices calling for self-reliant national development based on seif-sufficient village economy were dismissed as backward and utopian. The growing urban élite forged dependent links with the outside world and alienated themselves from the great bulk of the population who continued to live in the rural areas. The strategy also included some welfare measures, but mainly for the urban masses.

In practice, the model failed for two basic reasons:

1. External aid, both in terms of resources and of adequate transfer of technology, failed to materialize at the necessary rate; instead the 'gap' kept on widening, leading to increasing dependence on foreign sources and the inevitable loss of autonomy. Repayment of past debts alone threatened to choke off future development. What was given as aid was withdrawn through adverse terms of trade. Multinational corporations, which were the main conduits for the transfer of technology, extracted an exorbitant price for their know-how and machines while obstructing the means of repayment by restrictive export clauses. The highly capital-intensive, import-substituting technology which was implanted had little relation to real factor endowment, particularly availability of labour.
2. Internal resources for development had to come mainly from rural areas where, having alienated and exploited the peasants, the possibility of transferring surplus labour into realized savings was greatly diminished. Moreover, the regimes were unable to use coercive methods of capital accumulation, which countries with stronger administrative systems and commitment have successfully employed even while agricultural production has stagnated.

The model not only failed on its own terms, but also caused fundamental damage to the possibility of these nations mobilizing their own resources and shaping their own destinies. By borrowing foreign technology, the growth of appropriate local technology was smothered; as a result, the developing nations neglected to foster their own research capabilities and innovativeness, perpetuating a dependent relationship. The top-down method of centralized planning succeeded in alienating

the people while failing to construct an administrative machinery capable of implementing programmes.

The choice between dependence and greater self-reliance had to be faced. Given the character of the regimes, the soft option of external assistance remained the preference and the combination of moderate internal savings and limited foreign aid produced some growth. The very character of development, however, ensured a grossly unequal distribution of the benefits and the disparity grew enormously. Even in the rural areas, when profitable technology finally arrived in the 'sixties, the primary beneficiaries were the richer farmers who had pre-emptive access to the inputs and the necessary credit. The 'Green Revolution', introduced into an existing iniquitous rural social structure, further exacerbated the problems of inequality. While overall production showed an increase in some areas, the polarization in the rural society grew even more.

The magnitude of the problem has finally become too large to be ignored—both internally and internationally. To quote from two recent publications:

> It is now clear that more than a decade of rapid growth in under-developed countries has been of little or no benefit to perhaps a third of their population. Although the average per capita income of the Third World has increased by 50 percent since 1960, this growth has been very unequally distributed among countries, regions within countries and socio-economic groups.[1]

> ... The crisis of development lies in the poverty of the mass of the Third World, as well as that of others, whose needs, even the most basic—food, habitat, health, education—are not met; it lies, in a large part of the world, in the alienation, whether in misery or in affluence, of the masses, deprived of the means to understand and master their social and political environment ...[2]

The disenchantment

It took two decades to build the optimistic vision of a steadily developing world community depicted in the report *Partners in Development;*[3] it has taken barely five years for the disenchantment with the process to grow to universal proportions. It is no longer possible to defend either the past strategy of development or its all too visible results. Literature is overburdened with post-mortem critiques of development history which are unanimous on the appalling results and generally candid on the causes of the failure. We do not propose to review this extensive literature, whose basic thesis of the continued exploitation of the 'peripheral' areas by the 'metropolitan' core, both internally and externally, is now scarcely disputed.

On remedies, however, there is little agreement, due mainly to fundamental differences in the definition and objectives of 'development'. Three different strategies or approaches to development have been identified[4]—'technocratic', 'reformist' and 'radical'—which differ in objectives, in ideology used to mobilize support and in the way the benefits of the economic system and growth process are distributed.

The technocratic approach, with its emphasis on technological modernization, managerial efficiency and growth in GNP, held the centre of the stage for over two decades but is now in disrepute. The debate is seen to be between the reformists, who believe that the system can still be made to work if equitable distribution is built into an essentially growth model,[5] and those who favour a radical approach, redefining the objectives of development in the direction of rapid social change and redistribution of political power.

The options

The conventional growth model, with or without its reformist component, may perhaps succeed in achieving material progress for a length of time in some Asian countries where conditions seem favourable. These 'non-classical' conditions include massive inflow of foreign resources, a favourable resource/man ratio and a viable partnership between the national and international bourgeoisie. But such countries (e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore) constitute but a small proportion of the population of developing Asia.

For the bulk of Asia, the above constellation of conditions is neither existent nor foreseeable. For the conventional model to succeed, these countries must rely on the 'classical' conditions of capitalist accumulation, such as frugality, innovativeness, access to the home market and the political and military power to create international markets conducive to industrial growth at home. Due to the demonstration effect, the bourgeoisie of Asia have ceased to be frugal. In most countries they have, in addition, taken on a 'comprador' character, meaning among other things that much of their consumption expenditure is of foreign rather than domestic goods. This has created the paradox that the bourgeoisie in these countries by their high consumption expenditure on foreign goods are denying the possibility of the expansion of their own market and future accumulation, and are also contributing to the worsening of the balance of payments. Where restrictions on imports are being imposed (e.g. India) the defrugalization of the bourgeoisie and its directly adverse effects on the possibility of capital accumulation remain. This, coupled with the size of the population in relation to profit-maximizing technology which is ever-growing in capital intensity, makes it questionable whether the system can carry its large population on its back. As for innovativeness and access to foreign markets, the countries are trapped in a global framework which neither makes local innovativeness attractive nor offers opportunities of the colonial type for seizing external markets.

In view of these realities, the conventional growth model hardly offers a viable option today for most of Asia. The compulsions of accumulation itself therefore require that a different strategy be sought.

Historically, the only other known method of accumulation is that of human mobilization for the conversion of surplus labour into means of production. This mobilization implies (a) collectivist relations of production, (b) choice of appropriate technology and (c) self-reliance, which in external relations means economic independence via de-linkage from existing global dominance/dependence relations.

There are several Asian and non-Asian countries which have demonstrated in modern times that a total nationwide human mobilization can achieve rates of accumulation even exceeding those given by the capitalistic method at its best. The superiority of this method for most Asian countries today in terms of accumulation and growth is evident. First, the resource/man ratio makes the socially optimal technique in these terms considerably more labour-intensive than that which would be chosen under the conventional strategy. This optimum implies massive utilization of surplus labour, which is made possible only under the collectivist relations of production. Secondly, economic independence will bring an end to resource drain through unequal international exchange and to the loss due to distortion of the economy stemming from external economic domination. Both these factors will reinforce each other and together contribute to

accumulation and growth at a much higher rate.

The compelling economic case for mobilization as the method for accumulation has been supplemented by the demonstration effect of its socio-political feasibility in an increasing number of countries. The inspiration thus generated is interacting with the emerging internal contradictions in the Asian countries, strengthening thereby the positive forces for social change. This is making accumulation through mobilization historically relevant as a serious alternative in Asia.

Since mobilization as an accumulation strategy requires the adoption of collectivist relations of production, the implications of collectivism merit discussion.

The collective and the development of man

Historical experience indicates that specific forms of collectivist relations have specific bearings on development in a wider sense.

The ultimate purpose of development must be the development of man—the realization and unfolding of his creative potential. Since this development requires improvement in the material conditions of living so as to fulfil physiological and psychic needs, the role of accumulation in the process of augmentation of production forces via technical progress and expansion of capacity becomes crucial. Without accumulation, man lives in a subsistence or low level of physio-psychic conditions.

In some countries, the capitalistic method of accumulation has succeeded in amassing a vast amount of productive capacity, hence achieving a high level of material life. Nevertheless, not only has a sizeable proportion of the population at the bottom remained in relative deprivation, but also an increasing number of the populace are revealing their alienation from the system—the very source of their affluence.

The collectivist method is not immune to this possibility of degenerating into an alienating system. In the individualistic relations of production, surplus labour has been converted into means of production predominantly owned by a small class of oligopolistic capitalists. The very means of production that the worker has created decide his fate rather than serve him. A similar phenomenon is taking place under certain forms of apparently collectivist relations of production, where means of production are in theory socially owned but are controlled in reality by a neo-élite. Relations of production are collectivist in form but individualistic (capitalistic) in essence. To that extent man is being alienated and he is regressing in the plane of his development.

This danger has been recognized in some collectivist countries, where a struggle in the superstructure is taking place. The outcome of this struggle belongs to the future. But this is the only historically known method of man's struggle against himself in order to develop himself.

It is with the objective of exploring the nature of collectivist accumulation consonant with the development of man that we now proceed to spell out the philosophical moorings of a society inspired by such humanism.

Part One
Development Reconsidered

1 Development Philosophy and Objectives

Development defined

Our view of development is a process by which one's overall personality is enhanced. This is so for society as well as for an individual. For society the identity is collective. Thus development for society means development of the collective personality of society.

The collective is an association of individuals who interact mutually and collectively with each other with specified rules, and to which jurisdiction is consciously surrendered. Personality stands for a distinct identity, self-confidence, creative ability, an ability to face the world with poise, purpose and pride.

Development of collective personality requires physical (material, economic) development, but it is above all the development and application of consciousness and faculties. A child may grow physically while his personality does not develop. So it is with society. Thus 'economic development', while it is vitally necessary, cannot be treated as an independent question divorced from its social bearings. Development of a society is social development, a process in which 'economic' and 'non-economic' elements interact organically with each other. Attempts to isolate the 'economic' elements and fit them into any hypothetical model of 'economic development' are therefore unscientific.

Development thus defined is a multi-variate quantitative and qualitative change and may not be immediately measurable cardinally. This is not necessary. Development of an individual also may not be measured cardinally: one looks at his height and weight, and at his overall personality, and judges his development from one's own vantage point. By making the underlying value judgement explicit, communication is made possible. Weights are sometimes used to compare attributes by consensus among evaluators for limited purposes (e.g. for admission into school); such weights seldom enjoy universality, and judgement ultimately remains subjective. So it is with social development. It would be futile to attempt to measure any country's social development quantitatively and expect consensus about it: the world's richest society may be considered to be its sickest, and hence not developed at all. Such positions can be understood but cannot be refuted, and yet scientific judgements may be given on such a basis. While scientific judgements about social development need to be reasoned, cardinal quantification has often served as a fetish that has detracted from rather than helped evaluate the more essential qualitative attributes.

The individual and the collective

The individual and the collective might be thought to have conflicting interests. Our concept of the collective rules this out. The collective exists to the extent that individuals acquiesce in its sovereignty, and develops as individuals acquire more of this collective spirit. Thus a nation of 'self-seekers' may be a collective only in the sense that its members have agreed to hold a common passport; if there is no more of the 'collective spirit', it would be a very weak collective indeed.

However, the 'collective spirit' is not an abnegation of individual interest in favour of a mystified concept of 'society'. We view the collective as a method of serving individual interests while at the same time raising individual consciousness, so that one progressively aspires to fulfilment of higher orders including fulfilment in developing together. The individual will contribute his utmost to the collective output, from which he will in turn receive goods and services that enrich him materially, culturally, emotionally; these include material

products, social services, security, a sense of belonging to a society, pride in national achievement, fulfilment in helping one's distressed neighbours, and so on. To thus serve every individual, according to principles collectively determined to which every individual is a party, is indeed the very objective of the collective.

It is easy to see that the more everybody contributes to the collective the more everybody may receive from it. By definition the distribution decided upon by the collective maximizes social (collective) welfare out of given output, and the greater the collective spirit generated in individuals the greater will be the social output available for distribution.

Thus our view of the collective is not that of an 'agrarian utopia', but of a society where material production and economic growth are an integral part in the process of development of its collective personality. This concept of collective rules out the pursuit of the 'animal' spirit of self-interest, whereby one tries to take as much from society as one can without submitting to a collective evaluation of one's share in the give and take.

The invocation to look at the collective as a means of individual self-fulfilment is not new. 'Serve the people' is an age-old preaching by the great seers of mankind, although how far it has been demystified in terms of more understandable individual and social objectives could be questioned.

The community spirit is manifest in many tribal societies even today, with collective ownership of property as its material base (e.g. among the *khasis* in Meghalaya state in India and some of the islands in the Pacific), and in pre-capitalist agricultural societies in Asia and elsewhere, where despite breakdown of collective ownership a sense of community still prevails.

Aspirations frontier

Within the framework of the above philosophy development has to have its operational objectives. One of these is growth of the collective spirit mentioned above. Stimulating the spirit of cooperation is another, by means of which the collective consciousness may be promoted and the quantity of social good to be produced may be raised. Creativity and innovativeness, and a problem-solving approach to life, are essential attributes of a dynamic personality and have to be cultivated. Improvement of knowledge is a basic requirement. A will to develop and faith in the collective creative potential of man are fundamental prerequisites with which society must be equipped.

Somewhat more complex is the question of attaining an 'aspirations frontier'. At any point in time individuals in a society have certain natural aspirations, such as a minimum of nourishment, clothing and shelter, some leisure and opportunity for cultural-scientific pursuits. For many Asian societies this may have to be set as a long-run objective, beyond the material possibilities in the short run. This leaves the problem of sustaining morale in the short run.

The solution lies in the direction of creating values that give a sense of fulfilment in the very austerity that is necessary in the short run. Such fulfilment is possible only if the austerity is shared in a framework of collective effort for progress.

Self-reliance

Of all the new values to be created, self-reliance is the single most important. Asia has depended too long on external masters. Rural Asia has depended too long on the city. The

rural poor have been subservient too long to the rural rich and to the 'officer' sent from the city, a subservience that has been forced upon them; in the process their own initiative and vitality have been sapped. The result is a history of exploitation of the 'dependent' by the 'master'. The dependent, appearing to have no self-respect, commands no respect from others. He is laughed at by the world and despised at the same time as he is squeezed.

Asia cannot develop unless it rejects the soft option and resolves to be self-reliant. This means building up a combination of material and mental reserves that enable one to choose one's own course of evolution, uninhibited by what others desire. It requires maximum mobilization of domestic resources for poor societies, but above all it requires psychological and institutional staying power to meet crisis situations when the supply of essential materials is too short. This staying power is best attained collectively: individually a hungry man feels isolated and his mental reserve wanes; collectively this reserve is reinforced for each, and collective resolve gives individuals strength to fight a calamity with heads high.

Self-reliance does not necessarily mean self-sufficiency. With psychological staying power a self-reliant society can open up and negotiate from a position of strength. But some measure of self-sufficiency in strategic areas more easily prone to manipulation by exploitative interests is desirable. Such vulnerable areas are *staple food production*, *technology* and *spare parts*, and *military resistance power*.

All these make the development of appropriate technology indispensable. While development of a modern sector is imperative, the technological revolution has to be primarily internally achieved. It may have been genuinely hoped that the developing countries of Asia would not have to start from scratch—that they could borrow from the technology shelf of the West. But history has shown that import substitution of technology is virtually impossible; unequal exchange in international trade, restrictive clauses of transfer and the inappropriateness of highly capital- and skill-intensive western technology militate against the possibility of Asia achieving technological independence via an outward-looking strategy. Technological revolution has to be internally achieved also because of its social implications. The masses of the people must not be alienated by a transplantation of élitist technology not rooted in their lives. Technological development has to be based on local resources, and on people's own initiative and felt needs; it must also be efficiently labour-intensive so as to ensure optimum use of available local resources, of which labour is the most abundant.

Participatory democracy

The collective as we conceive it functions through the active participation of the people. Without this the individual would not belong organically to the collective and the collective itself would not to that extent be a reality. The collective and participatory democracy are hence inseparable concepts. Participatory democracy is not the formal voting of leaders into power once every five years and passive obedience in-between; it is not merely government 'of the people and for the people' but also, and more fundamentally, 'by the people'. Participatory democracy rules out dominance of any minority group over the broad masses of people. In the Asian context it precludes, therefore, dictatorship of the 'élite' over the

masses, of the city over the countryside and of the modern sector over the traditional, and new forms of external control which would dilute the process of democracy. Moreover, there is no room in this participatory system for power-wielding, though intelligent, leadership, which is alien to the broad masses of the people and tends to strengthen its own position at the expense of the latter; nor is there a place for the unaccountable and unresponsive bureaucrat who considers it beneath him to have any interaction with the masses.

Participatory democracy can be more fully practised the lower one goes in the organizational hierarchy of society, and must be so practised. At higher levels (e.g. regional, national), some system of representation becomes inevitable, and the problem arises of making the representatives remain true to the consciousness and aspirations of their respective constituencies and be truly accountable to them. The objective here is to devise a mechanism that lives up to this requirement.

Consciousness gap

The problem of a 'consciousness gap' between leaders of a society and the masses of the people remains. In concrete historical conditions in any society some persons may be ahead of others in perceptions of the need for social change, in their ability to systematize ideas whose origins are in the masses themselves, in seeing through complex relationships and in relevant technical expertise. Such men are natural leaders of society, whom the masses of the people tend to follow without coercion. Participatory democracy in such situations would not yet be complete, nor would the leaders be fully accountable to the people in a real sense. Such a relationship may be formally 'democratic', but at the depth of the situation lies the seed of leadership ego which may grow and gradually alienate the leader from his people, so that finally he leads them to a vision that is more his than theirs. This would in turn alienate the people, and inhibit the growth of their collective personality. The leadership and the masses must therefore move in a mutually interacting process that systematically reduces the consciousness gap. Democracy in this sense is not a system to be implanted, but an objective to be realized through a process.

De-alienation

Many of the above objectives imply a regeneration and development of values that man has lost or nearly lost through ages of subordination to exploitation, maladministration and misdirection. Regressive social relations and cultural taboos have paved the way for such alienation from man's original and inherent potentials. The binding constraint to development in Asia as we conceive it is not a shortage of physical resources but factors that inhibit the fullest expression of man's natural self: identity with work in which he should find pleasure and fulfilment, and with society in which alone he discovers his self, an identity that has been fragmented into élites and the masses, the ruler and the ruled, the privileged and the underprivileged, the 'superior' and the 'inferior'. Development then must mean a process of de-alienation, i.e. liberation from all inhibitions derived from the structure and superstructure of society that thus dehumanize its broad masses and prevent them from consummating their full potentials.

Conclusion

In essence, the development philosophy and objectives which we have enunciated centre around five core concepts which stand inseparably together:

1. *Man* as the end of development—which is therefore to be judged by what it does to *him*.
2. *De-alienation* of man, in the sense that he feels at home with the process of development in which he becomes the *subject* as well as the object.
3. Development of *collective personality* of man in which he finds his richest expression.
4. *Participation* as the true form of democracy.
5. *Self-reliance* as the expression of man's faith in his own abilities.

In the Asia that we are reviewing, rural society accounts for about 80 per cent of the total society. Rural development in Asia is therefore the key to its overall social development. The personality of Asian nations cannot be enhanced without raising the personality of rural Asia. This leads us to a strategy of development which points to the countryside as the centre of activity for contemporary Asia. The inner-directed strategy that we are seeking encompasses the city, but the focus and driving spirit is the village, where the new Asian Drama will inevitably have to be played.

Our methodology for developing the strategy is empirical. We first see, in Part Two, what is on the ground in a few selected Asian countries that seem to give us the range of options; then we examine them in the light of our development philosophy and objectives, and seek to understand why and how rural development occurs or fails to occur. The lessons we learn are knit into a strategy of rural development in Part Three.

Part Two
Country Experiences

2 India

The mood of 1947

Architects of Indian independence were reputed to be men of vision and compassion. For 30 years prior to independence, in prison and out, they had dreamt of a new India, united with its pre-colonial past and moving towards its 'manifest destiny'. Having evolved a programme of social change over a 50-year period, they promised to reform the Indian society: untouchability was to be abolished; evils of caste were to be eradicated; illiteracy and want were to be banished; complete equality was to prevail; exploitation was unthinkable; the human potential was to be liberated and nurtured.

In this task they believed they had the support of the masses. Though most of them came from a middle-class background, some genuinely expected to establish a 'state of the whole people'. They believed they had reason for the confidence; they were not just politicians but authentic folk heroes. They had not sought power, and in that sense, not only had the consent of the governed, but had 'consented to govern'. It is not surprising then that they fully expected to channel the energies of the masses from the struggle for freedom to the task of all-round development.

Gandhi had succeeded in making village India the focus of attention of the Congress, and long before independence he put forward the vision of a 'wantless' community, sometimes described as a cooperative commonwealth which would be not only self-reliant but also self-sufficient. With his faith in people, he expected this 'commune' to be established spontaneously and voluntarily once foreign rule was removed. The Congress, which he wished dissolved as a political party immediately after attaining independence, was to provide the enlightened and selfless cadres for this constructive work, pursuading the privileged to share with the deprived. Three thousand years of Indian history were to be selectively obliterated.

Community development, cooperatives and panchayats—the hope of the 'fifties

This was the background against which the Indian nation launched its first major programme of rural development. The Community Development Programme was a comprehensive self-help movement embracing education, health, drinking water, roads, agricultural production and cottage industries. It was conceived as a people's programme, mobilizing their energies, resources and labour for the general social upliftment of all. The role of the state was to be catalytic, providing technical support, some material aid and, when absolutely necessary, financial assistance. Priorities and needs were to be determined by the participants and the existence of a spirit of cooperation and traditional informal consensus mechanism was assumed. There was a firm belief that this effort to change attitudes and institutions would generate enough growth to solve the basic problems of want and ignorance in a decade or so, converting underutilized manpower into capital and goods.

To the national leadership it came as a shock, and perhaps as a betrayal, when the expected response failed to materialize. The isolation of the leaders and the alienation of the masses had already begun. While the leaders thought of the programme as a national effort directed at the poorest sections, the masses saw no evidence of it in their daily personal and community lives: neither their social condition nor their economic strength had changed and their immediate 'government', the local élites and exploiters, were neither touched in their conscience nor in their

power and asset base. The concept of an Indian National State remained for them as remote and abstract as ever.

In its own terms the refusal of the Congress to liquidate itself deprived the nation of a dedicated, independent, self-disciplined cadre, forcing it to rely on a bureaucracy whose authoritarian, élitist traditions were antithetical to the needs of a mass-based utopian movement. The bureaucracy served further to alienate the masses, particularly by its overt alignment with the rural élites, with whom after all it shared common attitudes and concerns. Social legislation, however radical or innocuous, had no chance of being implemented through the existing machinery.

The second failure was serious and, in view of the explicit commitments made prior to independence, the more unpardonable. Close as they were to the rural masses, the leaders were fully aware of the iniquitous agrarian structure and had promised to remedy it, either by radical redistribution of assets or by 'voluntary' cooperativization. They fully understood that such restructuring of society was a precondition for massive involvement, even from a purely non-economic, psychological point of view. No other act or pronouncement could have better signalled the dawn of a new era to the populace—both the beneficiaries and the losers—and created a climate in which spontaneous development efforts would have been born.

It is difficult neither to rationalize nor to assign motives for these two acts of commission and omission, but the fact remains that they spelt the doom of a noble, though utopian, idea. Having missed the historical moment for decisive action, the leadership has kept devising new policies and organizational designs aimed at bypassing the basic structural barriers rather than removing them once and for all. With each wrong or ineffective step the task has been rendered more difficult, persuading even the stronger proponents of 'social justice' to become 'pragmatic' and accept the reality.

It was not out of ignorance of the true state of affairs that the programme failed. The lack of mass participation (which was the basis of the strategy), excessive bureaucratization and unequal distribution of benefits were clearly recognized as the proximate causes of the failure. The response was to create local elected structures—panchayats—to decentralize democratic institutions in an effort to move decision centres closer to the people, to encourage their real involvement and to put the bureaucracy under popular control. This would have been a sound policy had it come earlier, and had it been accompanied by an agrarian revolution. By the time the panchayats were introduced at the end of the decade, the vested interests had further consolidated their position and captured the new institutions as well, giving *de jure* sanction to their unofficial influence.

In 1959, the Congress Party issued a resolution which declared that 'the future agrarian pattern should be that of cooperative joint farming in which the land shall be pooled for joint cultivation'. For a party which by then had been captured by the rural vested interests such a policy declaration could mean either a deflection from the main issue of radical asset redistribution or, more cynically, a new confidence among the élite in their strength and ability to live with any resolution without any danger of its implementation. In practice nothing happened except the further strengthening of the service cooperatives, which acted as conduits to channel resources to the larger farmers.

By the end of the decade, with the problems

of food shortage mounting and the idealistic dream fading, the country was ready for other, simpler solutions. These were not long in coming. The failure of the Community Development Programme was attributed to its diffused character, as it did not put sufficient emphasis on agricultural production which was considered to be a technical matter. It was thought that if production increased other changes would follow.

Intensive agricultural development programmes—the strategy of the 'sixties

Rarely could a document find a more favourable moment for its appearance than the *Report on India's Food Crisis and Steps to Meet It*, produced in 1959.[1] Its merit was its simplicity, dealing in understandable inputs (fertilizers, water, credit, extension services) and quantifiable outputs (tons of food grains) through technically sound relationships. To a country weary of 'intangibles' like spirit of cooperation, involvement of the masses and the quality of life, it was a welcome change to hard facts.

At one stroke, the problem of rural development, which was a comprehensive concept based on people, was transformed into a project for agricultural production, taking on a purely technological and managerial character. It was assumed that once production was assured, wherever it was most economical and by whoever was most efficient, distribution could always be managed to ensure equity and 'social justice'. The strategy rationalized and legitimized the withdrawal of the overextended state machinery from areas which were difficult, from people who were non-responsive and from spheres which were intractable to the comfortable sanctuary of well-endowed areas, 'progressive' farmers and technical questions. The retreat was thought to be as an advance. If there were some uncomfortable questions of regional disparities, social disequilibrium and the rise of an élitist cult, they were answered by maintaining that development was the 'art of the possible'.

The new approach became the basis of public policy and planning. Any remaining doubts were dispelled by two temporally overlapping and mutually reinforcing events: the severe droughts in 1966–7 and the momentous discovery of the high-yielding varieties (HYV) of cereal. The near famine created the seriousness and HYV provided the means for the 'New Agricultural Strategy', as it came to be known. The spectacular achievements were seen to prove the correctness of the approach and the success of the Green Revolution was claimed. As new varieties had been produced for all the major cereals, and the technology was certified to be size-neutral, it was thought to be potentially a factor in reducing regional and vertical disparities.

It soon became apparent, however, that the facts were otherwise. The revolution was confined to particular areas and crops, and mainly to larger farmers who could mobilize the resources necessary for the purchase-input-intensive technology. Had the output increase kept up the initial momentum, these issues might have been ignored. The unexpected stagnation in the 'seventies, however, reopened the entire question, initially as a technical debate, which soon broadened to include issues of equity, poverty and politics.

Growth or 'social justice'—the debate of the 'seventies

The split in the Congress Party in 1969 radica-

lized the tone of Indian politics. It facilitated a re-examination of many past policies, and policies on rural development were no exception. Distortions introduced during the past decade were officially acknowledged and 'corrective' actions initiated. While production was still unsatisfactory, distribution was not to wait any longer. The trickle-down theory was abandoned.

The new programme included the establishment of specialized agencies to identify and subsidize small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers, a massive comprehensive programme for the development of drought-prone areas and tribal areas, and a Minimum Needs Programme to ensure directly a minimum quality of life for the rural poor. Finally, the government committed itself to launching a new type of multipurpose institution in the rural areas—a cooperative 'Farmers' Service Society'—which would be controlled by the small farmers.

The debate on choice between growth and social justice has only begun. It has been sharpened by the deteriorating resource position. The Indian polity has been unable to offer a viable framework within which the two are complementary and not competitive.

Some 'success stories' and their lessons

Over the twenty-five year period since independence, there have been 'successful' attempts at rural development in India. While the broad causes of overall policy failures have been generally identified, the success of some of the attempts have lessons in terms of second- and third-order details, which must be kept in mind in launching any future programme. This applies both to what should be done and what should be avoided. In this sense, 'success' in some of the cases discussed here, while demonstrating the mechanism for growth, also illustrates the working of an undesirable social process.

Wheat in Punjab

In the 1960s, wheat yield in Punjab increased by 80 per cent, production by 200 per cent, and market arrivals by over 300 per cent. The state agricultural income and the per capita income trebled at current prices and soared 70 per cent above the national average. Optimism in Delhi, which is close to Punjab, was not ill-founded if, superficially, Punjab appeared to be the shape of the India of tomorrow.

Apart from the well-known technical, institutional and skill advantages which the state enjoys, the success of Punjab can best be understood if it is viewed as 'Punjab Incorporated', analogous to 'Japan Inc'. Here an agricultural state, controlled by large and influential farmers, set out seriously to organize itself single-mindedly to bring prosperity to the 'company'—and through it to its shareholders. The entire machinery of the state, from law and order to road building, was geared to this single purpose and no excuses for lapses were tolerated. Even corruption was functional: it steered allocation of scarce resources, e.g. fertilizers, to the highest bidder, who was forced to make the most efficient use of them. More specifically, the state:

1. Bargained with the central government from a position of strength to obtain the maximum allocation of inputs and maximum price for its grain 'exports'.
2. Streamlined the canal irrigation system and encouraged private tube-well construction.
3. Electrified every village in the state and constructed roads which brought every village to within one mile of an all-weather road.
4. Supported the organization of a first-rate agricultural university which did relevant research and produced trained manpower.
5. Organized an efficient and sufficient extension service, manned by young, technically competent workers who responded to the farmers'

needs because they knew that the state was serious about performance.
6. Quickened the cycle of research, multiplication and distribution of high-yielding seeds.
7. Organized an efficient system for the distribution of fertilizers, pesticides, credit and farm machinery.
8. Covered the state with regulated market yards and a powerful state purchase machinery (Marketing Federation) which dominated the transactions.
9. Streamlined the administration to provide a single line of command.
10. Maintained law and order, which could have posed a problem due to obviously increasing disparities.

With the exception of some neighbouring areas, it has not been possible to reproduce the Punjab model elsewhere in India.

Few parts of Asia have experienced the Green Revolution with the intensity of Punjab, which therefore represents the best example of what a technologically fuelled growth model can do when superimposed on a society based on inequality. Benefiting by the early adoption of the new technology, the larger farmers have started an expansion process (in spite of the land ceilings) which is driving the poorer farmers into the landless category and is increasing the degree of polarization in the society. The process is likely to continue and increase social tensions. Punjab illustrates, therefore, that growth is not synonymous with development.

Milk in Gujarat

In the general refrain of the rich getting richer in the managerially successful examples of Indian agricultural development, the growth of the dairy industry in Gujarat is a freak and therefore deserves careful analysis: it has mainly benefited small and medium farmers, and even those with little or no land.

The Anand Milk Union Limited (AMUL) was born in 1946 as a protest against private milk traders who were ruthlessly exploiting the producers. Starting with a few hundred litres of milk collected from eight societies, AMUL (operating mainly in one district) has grown into an agro-processing cooperative giant which collects 600,000 litres of milk per day from 240,000 members, organized in 840 village societies. The total annual turnover is around Rs. 400 million (8.60 rupees = 1 US dollar). The entire plant, worth over Rs. 50 million, is owned by the members and has been mainly built up over the years from operating surpluses. The value added to the economy of the district has been estimated to be now over Rs. 120 million per year, averaging Rs. 500 per member. Thirty-seven per cent of the producers, accounting for 23 per cent of the milk, are under five acres in size, while fully 87 per cent, accounting for 85 per cent of the milk, hold under ten acres. The benefits are clearly accruing to the small farmers.

In addition to providing an efficient collective mechanism for marketing milk, AMUL has taken various measures to boost the production of milk in the district. An artificial insemination service, a veterinary service, supply of high quality concentrates and fodder development programmes are some of the measures which have been made possible by cooperative action, at a very modest cost. AMUL employs 300 professionals in the Animal Husbandry section alone and has further trained local boys for simpler functions in each village society. Education of the extension staff and the farmers is a constant activity of the Union as a long-term investment in people.

AMUL publishes a monthly vernacular newsletter which is supplied to every member. It arranges group visits by women (who usually look after the animals) to the processing plant and uses the opportunity to acquaint them with family planning methods.

Through the National Dairy Development Board, 'AMULs' are being replicated successfully in different parts of the country, bringing to millions of small and marginal farmers a meaningful and remunerative new activity which primarily translates their labour into value. As 60 per cent of the milk produced in the country is produced by small farmers, they will be the major beneficiaries of the programme.

In contrast to other choices, AMUL shows that

choosing an activity like milk production, which is labour intensive and gives a comparative advantage to the small farmers, can serve as a direct conduit to the development of the target group. Specific ingredients in the success of AMUL appear to be as follows:

1. Honest, dedicated and motivated social workers of the Gandhian tradition are organizers and constitute the policy-level Board. Society bye-laws have been carefully designed to discourage vested interests and vigilance is constantly maintained.
2. Professional management and competent technicians work without interference.
3. Non-bureaucratic cadres (including local links) are responsive and accountable to the members.
4. Cost-conscious, efficient management with continuous concurrent audit and guidance from the Union keep the entire structure free of corruption and scandal.
5. Quality control and pricing of milk are open, fair and foolproof, with no favouritism possible.
6. Procedures for decision making are democratic and so are methods of promoting innovation.
7. Sound working relations have been established with other development agencies in the area.
8. Most importantly (and the organizers lay great stress on this point), AMUL is a homogeneous organization with a single objective.

Questions have indeed been raised as to why an organization with such enormous strength has not branched out into a more comprehensive effort at total development. It is maintained that it is precisely because AMUL concentrates on a non-controversial item like milk production that it has been able to transcend caste, class, faction and political schism within the village.

AMUL's strength is its weakness; the sponsors are wise to recognize it and to operate within the self-imposed boundaries.

AMUL is the best example of the positive force in Gandhian values. It inspired a group of sincere social workers to undertake the arduous task of organizing the poor against an exploitative system. That they succeeded at all, in spite of the continuation of the iniquitous social structure, is a tribute to their dedication, skills and shrewdness. In spite of the deliberately limited scope of its operations, the creation of a cadre and the multiplication of the pattern elsewhere in India has valuable lessons.

AMUL also shows the limitations of even a well-conceived and well-managed programme which seeks to benefit the poor without touching the rich. If the programme is too successful, it will eventually lead to a confrontation whose outcome is uncertain.

The Santhal Movement

At the other end of the spectrum is the Santhal Movement, which started with confrontation and moved into all-round development. We reproduce below the story of this recent phenomenon.

'Reports of a Santhal separatist movement in Bihar appear now and then and it is said that while the demand for a separate Jharkhand of the Santhals is an old one, what distinguishes the present movement is the violence that underpins it. The violence is said to have been brought into the movement by the new leadership, prominent among whom is Shibu Soren.

'Against the background of the several small, isolated groups of activists in the countryside, who are trying to move populations in rural pockets into action against the established iniquitous order of things, the Santhal movement stands out for two reasons. Unlike the other groups which are led by young middle-class men who have entered the fray out of certain convictions, the Santhal movement is a movement of the Santhals under Santhal leadership. Secondly, apart from its various political and educational activities, it has something of a programme for agricultural improvement.

'How does the movement function? What are its aims and what do its leaders do to achieve them? Shibu Soren is one of the leaders of the Jharkhand Mukti Andolan which, together with the Jharkhand Party, wants a tribal state separate from Bihar, within India. Another colleague of Soren, Vinod Bihari Mahato, himself not a Santhal but a Mahato (a farmer community in South Bihar), is in jail under

MISA. Shibu himself is 32 years old. He is energetic, but scornful of theorists who he thinks rarely relate to local conditions and problems. Shibu is not even a matriculate. He had to give up school because, according to him, the Mahajans murdered his father, so that he then had to work and look after his younger brothers. He got married, and managed to get a contract for felling trees. Some five years ago, he joined the movement. Shibu has no regard for political parties: "I don't want to have anything to do with politics," was a repeated remark by him in the course of our conversation. "All we want is to live like human beings."

'However, the key aspect of the programme espoused by this Utopian approach is still food. "We must eat all the year round. So far, the Santhal (or Majhi) has worked for twelve months, and starved for twelve months, and the moneylender has reaped the harvest. This must change." Thus the movement is by no means postponing its economic programme till its political demand for Jharkhand might be granted. Thus the political education of the Santhals is actually being sought also through a production programme. "Our people are illiterate and ignorant. They cannot see beyond their noses. All these leaders from the cities talk to them about 'economic progress', when they do not know the concept through their own experience. They have never learnt to plan, not even the next crop. All this has to be changed, and we are doing it right now by undertaking several programmes."

'Thus, in Tundi Tehsil, in the tribal belts of Giridih-Hazaribagh, the Santhal Parganas, the tribesmen have taken over land which was in the possession of moneylenders. The moneylenders (called Mahajans) may keep their land if they cultivate it themselves (I saw one graduate ex-moneylender ploughing his field) and put their own hand to the plough. The land reclaimed from moneylenders has been distributed among the landless Santhals. I was told that in Tundi, at least, no one is a landless labourer. This land is cultivated by what Shibu calls *samuhikheti*. What does this mean in practice? All the implements, bullocks and manpower in the village are deployed *en masse*, when the agricultural season sets in. If a particular field needs three oxen teams, and the owner has only one, his neighbours lend a hand and when his field is ploughed, he takes his team to help out the others, and the work of preparing the land which may otherwise take a month, is completed in a week. All agricultural operations are done by this method. While the ownership is still individual, labour is being pooled into a team. Last year, for the first time, paddy was grown cooperatively. Paddy used to be the sole crop. This winter, I saw wheat in several fields, forming a long belt; in fact, wherever water was available for irrigation the Santhals have planted wheat, a crop which has never been grown in this area before. Indeed, a winter crop itself was unheard of. For the first time people thus had grain in their houses long after the harvest had been gathered in. Soren said that the Santhal was just learning in some areas to put by seed for the next season. They would eat up their meagre crop and the following year borrow seed from the moneylenders at usurious rates.

'So the organisation had started what he calls a grain "gola". The grain gola comprises contributions on five accounts. As soon as the harvest is in, every farmer is required to deposit in this storehouse twice the quantity of seed he uses. Part of this is to pay for the labour he has taken from his neighbours, just as they must pay for his. The leadership is confident that this will enable the Santhal to escape from the clutches of moneylenders. Moreover, in the areas controlled by the Jharkhand separatists—certainly in Tundi—the farmers are strictly forbidden to sell their grain to the city merchants. This helps to ensure that there is food in every house. The seed deposit is one of the five "accounts" which every household (i.e., every unit which cooks for itself) must maintain in the grain house. Another account is the contribution to the night schools. Every parent with children between the ages of 4 and 15 years must contribute 10 kg of paddy per year per child to the grain gola. Every village will have its teacher who is to be paid in paddy. A teacher can be a boy with high school education. He need teach the children the three R's. These are night schools and are called "akil akhada". ("Akil" is brain and "Akhada" is the wrest-

ler's ring where the trainee wrestles). During the day, the master may go about his own business. The leadership is emphatic about the importance of education: without it nothing is possible; even prohibition, imposed and enforced by the leadership in these villages today, will have a lasting effect only if people are educated and understand the need for it. The other two accounts are: political activities and visitors. To support the Jharkhand Mukti Andolan each household must contribute 10 kg of paddy and Rs 3 per year. As for visitors, an annual contribution of one rupee and 1 kg of paddy per year per household is envisaged.

'I was taken to see one grain gola, where rice was stored in containers made of twisted ropes from paddy stems. The accounts were kept in ledgers. In another village the man in charge of the store-house had gone to a meeting, and at a third Shibu had to remonstrate with the local workers because they had failed to establish the grain gola. I also saw an Akil Akhada. The schoolmaster was a young boy, who had studied up to the prematriculation class and then given up because of financial troubles. Shibu called him "Master Saheb".

'I also attended the camp court or "baishi". It is really an assembly of about 20 villagers. Among other things, the assembly hears quarrels and disputes. The Majhis, I was given to understand, do not go to regular courts any longer, preferring the cheaper and speedier justice meted out by the "baishi". From independent sources, I heard that the courts in Giridih were practically deserted. The "baishi" I attended was devoted to explaining the necessity for grain golas, and in telling the villagers to come to a meeting the next day.

'When I went to see Shibu he was preparing to set off the next day for a public meeting; his companions were just as busy, organizing things for a mammoth meeting—expecting a crowd of 10 lakhs (one million).

'Where does violence fit into their scheme, I persevered. Shibu and others tell you that they do not like violence, but if it is used against them, they will and do retaliate. Bows and arrows, and axes, are their traditional weapons, carried quite matter-of-factly. Recently, two Santhals were attacked by the Mahajans (moneylenders), their motor-cycle was burnt and the men were left for dead. They were alive. The Santhal drums began to beat, a huge crowd gathered on the spot and the Santhals retaliated with fury.

'Shibu stresses that Santhals have confiscated the land, animals and grain belonging to the Mahajans, and the Mahajans driven out. But it was not because they were 'outsiders' or nontribals. There are the rare Marwaris among the Majhis: I found several non-Majhis including a Bhumihar. There was one Marwari who, the Majhis had complained, had Majhi land in his possession. On investigation, the leadership had found this to be true but had also found that the Marwari tilled the land himself.'[2]

3 Bangladesh

First independence

As in India, in Bangladesh also (then East Pakistan) 1947 did not signal any substantial change in its rural socio-economic scene. No serious official effort at rural development was launched. Ayud Khan's basic democracies were primarily a political instrument to ensure control of the countryside, and to put the regime's rural agents absolutely on top. The economic programme entrusted to the basic democracies, such as the Works Programme, provided some periodic employment but no basic change for sustained development.

The Comilla Experiment

Somewhat independently, with official cover, material and personnel support but with a considerable degree of functional autonomy, Akhtar Hameed Khan's Comilla Experiment emerged gradually as an outstanding effort at building an institutional infrastructure for sustained agricultural growth in rural areas. The Comilla area moved towards the Green Revolution as a result. Much social stimulation was generated, skills were developed, and many people interacted socially in the cooperatives and in the thana training centres. But the motivation to which this experiment addressed itself was primarily that of *individual* gain and not of *social development* of which individual gain could be a part. This turned the institutions essentially into forums for *competition* rather than *cooperation*, although cooperation was the slogan and 'cooperatives' were the vehicle to prosperity. Thus the villagers competed, in the institutions provided by the Comilla Experiment, for scarce material inputs, credit, extension service, training, marketing and managerial power, and for personal channels to managerial and administrative powers. Being a competition between unequals, the inevitable happened, and the distribution of net benefits of the project tended, after an initial period of learning the rules of the game, to become more and more skewed. This was brought out in a recent paper:

> A study of 32 managers of village cooperatives ... shows that 17 of them held more than 5 acres of land, another 8 held between 3 and 5 acres, while only 7 held between 1 and 3 acres of land (none held less than 1 acre or more than 9 acres). The average size of their holdings in Comilla Thana is 1.86 acres ... In a study of four successive managing committees of the ACF, it was found that, of 12 elected members in each committee, the number having farming as their only occupation fell gradually. It was 8 in the first committee, 5 in the second committee, 3 in the third committee and 2 in the fourth. Those who were farmers as well as contractors, on the other hand, had no representation in the first committee, but they were in simple (though not absolute) majority in the last committee, with 5 members ... It should be mentioned that contracting is a full-time job, and if these people were farmers they must have been very casual ones.
>
> It was also found that managing committee members were getting an inordinate share of total loans. Of 30 members who responded to a questionnaire, 11 were managing committee members, and they consumed 65 per cent of all loans issued to these 30 ... 67 per cent of the overdue loans were defaulted by Directors of managing committees.[1]

Akhtar Hameed Khan himself reports on the problem of wilful default thus:

> The problem of wilful and mischievous defaulters is specially alarming. Historically the old cooperative system was captured by influential people and they castrated it by wilful default. The same sort of people want to perform the same operation on the new cooperative system. They are powerful and well informed. They know that the old sanctions (certificates, notices, pressure by officers) are now dead, and they can repudiate their obligation with impunity. If the new cooperatives are to be saved from mischievous defaulters, the other members, the majority of small farmers, for whom cooperative credit is the only means of escape from the clutches of the moneylender traders, must create new sanctions. They must learn to control the disruptors by developing a new set of rules of 'bichar' and 'shasti', a kind of 'members court'.[2]

The project as a whole was designed to serve a 'middle' range of farmers, rather than the relatively richer—who knew how to take care of their interests—or the poorer—who possessed little or no land, were not credit-worthy, and needed a non-land-based programme that

would have gone beyond the central thrust of the project. This tilted the power-balance in the area towards the *leaders* of this middle strata and away from the traditional richer gentry, a phenomenon that is common to such institutional developments. But there was no institutional device specifically designed to ensure that the *masses* of the middle strata shared this new power effectively; the latter could not, therefore, be expected to receive anywhere near equal privileges from these institutions, and, as shown above, they did not.

A 'soft programme' with most of the inputs and services heavily subsidized, the Comilla project represented a net inflow of resources into the project area directly. The indirect effect on resource flows into and out of the region via rise in agricultural production, release of surplus or direct use of project credit in off-project business, etc. remains a question for a careful study.

But the direct impact of the project on attitudes was not conducive to the growth of any self-help consciousness in the project area, and would have made experiments with harder programmes in other areas difficult.

Finally, one of the 'area problems' summarized for the Bangladesh/FAO/UNDP Workshop on Comilla held in April 1974 was as follows:

> As a result of introduction of modern technology the productivity of land has risen and farming has become profitable. Therefore, land owners have become interested in tilling their land themselves or by hiring labourers instead of giving land to share-croppers. Share-cropping is thus declining. As a result, share-croppers are now becoming landless labourers, subsistence farmers are also becoming labourers and less viable.[3]

Second independence

At the same time as the Comilla project was developing, the East-West Pakistan contradiction was unfolding and Bangali nationalism was being born. A movement of a decade and a half—political, literary and cultural—culminated in epic mass arousal and confrontation that climaxed in the 'war of liberation' in 1971. This threw altogether new forces on to the scene.

The method of resistance by the Bangalees during the 'war of liberation' was spontaneous, original and innovative out of sheer necessity. It represented a break-away from centuries of administrative, social and cultural norms. Masses were mobilized, and often mobilized themselves, to do things no one had ever thought could be done, and these were acts not only military but also economic. Thousands of people built roads and bridges by voluntary labour for a common social cause; thousands ate together from the same hearth, shared and used personal belongings and property as if they were communal property; they suffered and worked together in difficult environments without privileges and hierarchical or élitist divisions; they innovated individually and socially; and they set up institutions of mass initiative, administration, vigilance and accountability. Even where élite classes stayed in command the leadership exercised methods of mobilization and administration that were of a highly innovative character, and interacted with the masses in non-traditional ways. This was an entirely new experience, and released many of those involved from deep-rooted prejudices and inhibitions that had held them back from creative feats and collective endurance that they now experienced were possible.

Those who were thus involved in the resis-

tance acquired a new manhood, which had great constructive possibilities. Having experienced these possibilities themselves, they had their aspirations raised too, with a greater *social* content therein than before.

Unfortunately, these experiences were not shared by everybody, and for many others they were not sustained as long as was necessary for revolutionizing values and institutions. They were, in other words, too short in space and time to become the dominant force after independence. The balance of post-independence political power remained with those relatively untouched by the liberating experiences.

The new government leaned heavily on the administrative apparatus that was inherited from the past, rather than attempting the more difficult task of building on the innovative experiences during the resistance, and the political methods and machinery of the government also remained traditional in character. Specifically, the effective class interest of the government remained that of the landed gentry against the substantial interest of whom no state policy would be taken, and who remained the principal link between the centre and the countryside. The rural masses were thus thrown back into the grip of their former exploiters as a class who by virtue of their newly sanctified positions were now more powerful than ever before. Obviously, nothing much could be expected from them by way of serious mass mobilization for developing rural Bangladesh.

While high aspirations were being voiced all around, official policy remained restricted to performing such formalities as extending the 'Integrated Rural Development Programme', designed in principle to duplicate Comilla, to new areas and allocating resources and personalities for rural development. The condition on the ground remained structurally the same as before independence, while the exploiters in the countryside with their new power went all out to consolidate their material positions. The resulting racketeering amidst severe post-war shortages brought the masses of the rural poor near the limits of survival; the famine of 1974 pushed the weakest of them over the brink. In the process, economic polarization in the countryside accelerated steeply.

Development impulses

While the overall rural scene has considerably worsened since liberation, the impulses of development generated during the independence struggle have not totally died out. People from different walks of life—administrators, students and intelligentsia, specialists and politicians—besieged by aspirations for building a new society and inspired by the experience of the independence struggle, have tried in their own individual and limited capacities to mobilize and move people forward. The methods they have used and are using have no parallel in pre-independence days, and are rooted instead in the experience of the independence struggle. They reflect a liberation of aspirations and the mind that has led these people to identify personal fulfilment with initiative and involvement in social mobilization, of a character that is more generally associated with 'revolutionary' societies.

People's Health Centre

One such effort is that of a young medical specialist and his team, who operated a hospital camp near the Indo-Bangladesh border during the independence war to treat wounded Mukti-Bahini fighters, and after liberation moved their camp into Savar

Thana in the Dacca district. The scope of the People's Health Centre, as it is called, was conceived as a 'cooperative health programme gradually integrating itself with a rural development programme'. The project started with field clinics to treat diseases, as the point of first contact with the villagers, and a paramedical training programme which enlisted students at a nearby university as its first batch of trainees. Through odds which ranged from resistance by the bureaucrats in Dacca to frequent armed robberies in their camp at Savar, the project moved on, and gained the increasing confidence of the villagers by the dedication of its leaders, their competence as doctors, and their unelitist and unbureaucratic, field-oriented style of operating. It was insisted that treatment was not to be free, and the villagers either had to pay for the services on the spot, or be members of a family health insurance scheme, the first such scheme in the country, by paying two taka (14 taka = 1 US dollar) per month. This was done not only to raise some finance for the project, but as a conscious principle that free medical treatment would contribute to a perpetuation of the traditional 'relief' mentality that was a drag on the overall development of the villagers' personality and spirit of self-help. The work initially started in two unions in the thana with some 4,500 families; and in one year some 1,400 families, or 31 per cent of the total number of families, were enlisted in the insurance scheme. In two years the project as a whole covered 205 villages in the area; and the health insurance scheme had been introduced in 78 of them, enlisting in all some 3,308 families, comprising 30 per cent of the families in the villages under the scheme. The method of mobilization included mass meetings, house-to-house campaigns by the leaders and the paramedics, and persuading those families who had enlisted themselves and were benefiting from the membership to talk to other families and try to enlist them.

The project moved cautiously into family planning, an area considered to be highly sensitive and embedded with deep-seated prejudices. But the village women were more than half-ready, and the enlisting of young village girls as motivators and counsellors in this area proved highly productive. Latent demands for family planning services surfaced rapidly, and psychological inhibitions quickly gave way. The problem soon was one of supply, not of demand, constraint. Among the various innovations in this area, the most noteworthy perhaps is the launching of a method of tubal ligation on women, performed under local anaesthesia in two hours by female paramedics without the assistance of a doctor, with a guarantee covering any possible loss due to the operation and follow-up home visits in case of any complications.[4] Considered against the standard medical practice of seven days' hospitalization for tubal ligation, to be performed only by qualified medical doctors 'who really know the job', this innovation at the People's Health Centre, and the success of it, are outstanding.

The project is moving ahead as a seemingly viable venture. The training of paramedics is now progressing towards the creation of full time, paid medical auxiliaries rather than 'volunteers' drawn from student and other bodies, who could not be counted on as stable workers in the programme.

In accordance with its conceived scope, and pushed by its internal functional logic, the project is today on the point of entering into the broader economic life of the villagers. Initiatives in providing gainful work for the village women, such as sewing, are also being taken. Efforts to form a corps of para-professional agricultural development workers with the assistance of trained agricultural graduates proved abortive, as the graduates who were interviewed for supervisory positions were ignorant beyond book knowledge and were found worthless. The medical general staff of the project are themselves now trying their hands at farming, as a step towards helping the villagers reap better dividends from the soil.

'Tip shai chhi chhi' (thumb sign fie fie)[5]

Raumari, an area in Rangpur district, was a liberated area throughout the independence war. A number of intelligentsia from all over the country, young field officers and other motivated Bangalees assembled there and dreamt and planned about rebuilding

Bangladesh. A mass literacy programme was conceived there, and after full liberation some of the youth who had assembled in Raumari got involved in mass literacy works in parts of North Bengal. Mass literacy centres were opened, and many young boys and girls enlisted as teachers for a nominal 30 taka a month.

On 6 July 1973, village Katchubari-Kristapur in Thakurgaon Thana in Dinajpur district was declared completely free of 'thumb sign' (i.e. thumb impression as a substitute for signature), and it was claimed that every villager above the age of seven years was able to read and write the alphabet and simple constructions, including his or her name. This was the first such village in Bangladesh, and the feat was accomplished by a total mobilization, over the previous two months, with the following special features:

1. The village youth, led by high-school and early college students, some of whom were failures in the school, decided to eradicate the thumb sign in the village by a major *social* thrust in addition to mobilizing villagers for other community work.
2. In addition to house-to-house campaigns, small children were lined up every morning to parade through the village with slogans charging the villagers, among other things, to liberate themselves from the degrading 'thumb sign'.
3. Local government offices and agencies where the villagers had to go and sign for registration, credit, etc. were persuaded by the youth of the village not to accept the thumb impression from any resident of their village, and to insist that he or she either sign his or her name or give a *nose impression*, considered traditionally a great humiliation.
4. Centres were opened and run by volunteers to give crash training in the two Rs to all villagers in the target age group who did not know the alphabet and could not sign their full names.

When the news of the first village which had totally wiped out the thumb impression reached Dacca, the government was persuaded to hold its two-day International Literacy Day function of 8–9 September in Thakurgaon to honour the village. This news stirred up youth in other villages in Thakurgaon, who raced with each other to equal the feat of Katchubari-Kristapur with more or less the same methods. Three other villages achieved it by 8 September, and several others were close.

The International Literacy Day function was held with due pomp for two days in Thakurgaon town, five to six miles from Katchubari-Kristapur. The youth of the village had repaired the road from the town by mobilizing voluntary community labour, so that the élites from Dacca could come to their village in motor cars and rickshaws. These élites included the President, a number of Cabinet Ministers, central secretaries, intellectuals and politicians. But none came to the village Katchubari-Kristapur, and the youth there waited and wept.

However, their feat was recorded and inspired youth in many other villages in the country. 'Tip shai chhi chhi' became the slogan. At least 35 villages were unofficially estimated to have eradicated the *tip shai* by late 1974, and many others were well on their way.

The Rangpur Self-reliant Movement

Of a different order, the Rangpur Self-reliant Movement was started in mid-1973 by the Rangpur District Agricultural Officer (DAO) in an unofficial capacity. It was first launched as a pilot project in the village Kunjipukur, a relatively egalitarian village where all landowners were peasants and the richest peasant owned 30 acres of land. The movement aimed at organizing the peasants for all-round development of their lives, emphasizing self-reliance to resist exploitation that comes through dependence, and with the explicit aim of eventually sending peasants to represent peasants in the government. Through exemplary personal modesty and sincerity, the DAO was able to become 'one' with the peasants and Kunjipukur was soon in the news with achievements of the following order:

1. Election of a 'Krishi brigade' (agricultural brigade) by the peasant community at a mass meeting, for leadership in mobilizing the community for self-reliant development.

2. Repayment of all outstanding loans taken by the peasants previously from the official cooperative credit schemes.
3. Reform in the terms of share-cropping, raising the cultivator's share from 50 per cent to 60 per cent.
4. Collective decision on who would work on whose land, replacing the previous system of bilateral negotiations, which also ensured employment for all the landless or land-poor in the village.
5. A common fund for both cash and crops, on whose disposal the Krishi brigade would decide in consultation with the community.
6. Community planting of fruit trees on spare land in the village, collective care of the trees and equal distribution of the fruits to members of the collective.
7. A 'people's court' to settle disputes among members of the village.
8. Responsibility for raising poultry 'officially' given to the women, who would sell their products and take the profit themselves, to move towards economic independence from the men.
9. Literacy programme, family planning, sanitary reform, sewing classes, and a general cleanliness campaign that made Kunjipukur easily the cleanest village in the country.
10. Construction of economic infrastructure—such as roads, irrigation channels and compost pits—by free community labour.
11. Collective purchase of agricultural inputs from the government and their distribution through the Krishi brigade in consultation with the community.

Encouraged by the response in Kunjipukur, the movement spread to several other villages in Rangpur. Members of the Kunjipukur Krishi brigade, as well as staff of the District and Thana Agricultural Offices themselves inspired by the DAO's efforts, worked as motivators to extend the movement to other villages. By now about 60 villages are sworn members of the movement and are taking the challenge seriously. While Kunjipukur (and a couple of others) remains the show-piece model because of more favourable structural conditions, and sharper economic polarizations exist in a number of other villages in the programme, the vested interests seem at least for the time being caught in the limelight of the slogan for self-reliant collective village development, which is receiving general social admiration in various respectable quarters including the news media. Some of the vested interests themselves are in the respective Krishi brigades which deliberate and operate openly, and this has seemingly 'trapped' these interests into cooperation with, and even prominent roles in, the movement.

The idea of self-reliance has been taken very seriously by the sponsors of the movement, which rejects begging and accepting any relief at the individual level, and any grants at the community level. 'If every village takes grants from the government, then our government will have to beg from foreign governments; this will be a disgrace for an independent nation, and it will be the villagers who would be the cause of this national disgrace. We therefore want you to come and give us encouragement, blessings, and advice; but not your money.' These simple words have become part of the vocabulary of these villages, and all offers of grants, including in one case an offer by the Minister in charge of Rural Development and Cooperatives of a grant of several thousand takas for one of these villages in appreciation of its work in a mass meeting in the village, have been systematically declined. The most outstanding achievement of the movement was perhaps its unique way of resisting the 1974 famine which hit Rangpur district the hardest,[6] where alone an estimated 80 to 100 thousand persons died of starvation and malnutrition in two to three months. The self-reliant villages of Rangpur did not allow any relief to enter their boundaries, did not permit anyone to go to the relief centres (gruel kitchens) opened by the government, and did not let anyone die: the communities met and arranged contributions from those who had some surplus, to be given to the distressed in return for some work devised collectively.

Relief distribution: the collective decides

No less poignant was the experience of a team of

Dacca University students and teachers who went on a relief mission to some flood-stricken villages in Brahmanbaria in October 1974.[7] People there had been starving for the previous two to four days and the women had little left in the way of clothing. The materials taken by the relief team were too meagre relative to the need, and an agonizing distribution problem was faced.

The team gathered the villagers together, almost all of them in dire need of relief, and asked them collectively to rank the families most in need of food in order of the duration of starvation; they also asked the women collectively to rank those in need of saree in similar order. The response from these staggered communities, in village after village, was remarkably impressive and highly educative: after vigorous discussions the ranking was unanimous in most places, and the relief team's inability to help all but the most acutely distressed families as identified by them was fully appreciated by the people.

The lesson was clear. Here was the analytical gist of the problem of acute scarcity in daily necessities that the nation would live with over the next few years, perhaps even decade. Any system of distribution that would link the needy individually to the source of supply was bound to degenerate into scrambles for special privileges, and aggregate discontent about the distribution system would prevail in proportion to the sum of individual frustrations independently perceived. The problem was a collective one and had to be solved collectively. By invoking collective responsibility individual frustrations could be reduced first by the consciousness, to be acquired through the exercise of collective responsibility, of the problem of scarcity itself; secondly, through the sense of social responsibility with which the collective would be charged; and thirdly, in the knowledge that the distribution system could not be fairer. One would then find some fulfilment in serving such a system itself, notwithstanding one's material sufferings. Administratively, such a system would mean both democracy and decentralization and would release the energy of higher level leadership for tackling larger issues.

Evaluation

What we have described are three of the more prominent innovative approaches to rural development in post-independence Bangladesh, and an *ad hoc* experiment in distress relief distribution that demonstrates what is possible. The quantitative significance of all such efforts taken together in the total national landscape may not be great; but in qualitative terms, these efforts represent initiatives in a new direction by sections of the society that need to be reckoned as a factor in the rural development process in Bangladesh, which is certain to interact dialectically with the more traditional approaches in this area.

As long as the substance of state power in the countryside remains rooted in the vested interests, however, there is no possibility that efforts like the above will develop into major national thrusts. The viability of such unofficial efforts themselves would in fact be inversely proportional to the extent they hurt privileges of these interests. In this respect the People's Health Centre at Savar has certain advantages. Health has not traditionally been a hunting ground for the major vested interests in the countryside. Those interests who are being affected are rather the traditional medical profession and the medical and family planning bureaucracies, and resistance from these quarters has come. After initial difficulties, the reputation that the project has by now gained nationally and internationally may provide sufficient protection to it in this respect. This also, at the same time, contains the seed of possible degeneration insofar as the project is at this stage heavily dependent on external assistance, both for its capital and current financial needs.

The work of the project in the family planning area has already considerably roused

women's consciousness, and its efforts to find independent earnings for the women may further contribute in this direction. The project has not yet entered substantially into the general agricultural life of the villagers. While preparations to move in this direction are afoot, it is not clear how involved the doctors and their associates would like to be in this area, and in the near future they may not be able to afford too much involvement given their preoccupation in their field of primary interest. Projects like this, the operational scope of which is narrow and remains narrow, may be sustained. But for the same reason they may not contribute significantly to fundamental social change in the countryside, which is necessary for overall development of the rural masses.

The literacy movement, equally, is one of narrow scope. At the moment it is not even related directly to the daily life of the villagers, and as such its motivation is provided by the impulses of the literate youth of the villages, a consciousness external to this life rather than generated internally from within it out of its own experience. Without such a root in the soil, movements like this are like bubbles that will disappear and tend to be forgotten, unless external forces, such as state policy, sustain them. The movements nevertheless are important, as demonstrations of what is possible. They assert that there are methods that can be applied to the concrete conditions of the society as serious alternatives to the traditional mechanical-bureaucratic methods, methods that can mobilize the people to accomplish in a few months what otherwise could not be accomplished in centuries, and that as *methods* these are not specific to any particular country, historical condition or socio-economic system, although their impact can be fully felt only in the appropriate socio-economic structure.

The self-reliant village movement of Rangpur is one with more complex possibilities. It embraces a much wider spectrum of village life, raises the economic and social status of the village poor, curbs privileges of the traditional vested interests and makes racketeering by the latter difficult. It socializes the peasants, and major economic and social questions previously given to bilateral or oligarchic exchanges and coterie decisions are now to be settled collectively. This strengthens the hitherto unsocialized mass of the poor peasants, and opens the door to growth of collective consciousness on their part about their human rights as well as their deprivations. This cannot be an equilibrium situation, and such a programme in the present context of the country must unfold sharp conflicts. Amidst exploitation by their class as a whole all over the country, the traditional vested interests in the self-reliant villages cannot be expected to submit to the collective morals of the programme with equanimity, and the glamour of collective self-reliance can at best be a very temporary sedative. Sooner or later one would expect resistance to the movement, and the resulting dialectics should be rather interesting to study.

4 Sri Lanka

The welfare state

The performance of the Sri Lanka economy has been cited as an exemplary case of redistribution with growth.[1]

There was a growth of GDP of the order of 4 per cent per annum during the 1950s and 1960s. A strong and consistent 'welfare' orientation among successive governments has resulted in a better distribution of income and better social services than in most Asian countries.

High rates of personal and corporate taxation over a long period of time, and more recently the ceiling on incomes,* have been the main causes of lowering the share of the high-income group. Simultaneously, a system of minimum wages for workers and distribution of crown land to peasants contributed to the redistributive process. Other welfare measures which benefited the lower income groups were: the provision of free education from primary to university level, which improved the literacy of the people and raised their aspirations; a free health service in the urban and rural areas, which helped to improve health conditions and reduce infant and maternal mortality; and a system of subsidies on essential consumer items like rice and sugar, which increased the intake of calories among the lower income groups. At one stage, one kilo of rice per week was given free. In all, over half of current government expenditure was directed towards welfare programmes of one kind or another.

The result of these measures on income distribution has been summed up as follows:

Table 1 Percentage of Total Income Received by Decile Groups of Spending Units or Households in Sri Lanka, 1953, 1963, 1970 [2]

Deciles	Percentage of Income: Spending Units or Households		
	1953	1963	1970
Lowest	1.9	1.5	3.3
Second	3.3	3.0	3.9
Third	4.1	4.0	5.0
Fourth	5.2	5.2	5.0
Fifth	6.4	6.3	6.5
Sixth	6.9	7.5	7.9
Seventh	8.3	9.0	10.0
Eighth	10.1	11.2	12.0
Ninth	13.2	15.5	15.0
Highest	40.6	36.8	30.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The figures indicate that there has been a reduction of about ten percentage points in the share of income received by the highest decile of households and an increase of 1.4 percentage points in the share of the lowest decile. The major part of the decrease in the former has, however, benefited the next three deciles.

Apart from redistributing current income and implementing some welfare measures, an attempt was made to change the asset distribution structure through land reform. The first attempt came with the Paddy Lands Act of 1958. It was intended mainly to safeguard tenancy rights of small paddy producers. This legislation was rendered ineffective by loopholes in the original law and slow follow-up due to opposition from vested interests. In 1972, further land reforms were attempted by

* In the budget of November 1975 the ceiling was removed.

imposing a ceiling on land holding of 25 acres of paddy land or 50 acres of other agricultural land. Land in excess of these amounts was vested in the state and a variety of experiments are taking place in the use of land thus transferred.

Redistribution with growth

Though there was some growth to support the welfare programmes, when viewed in the light of the requirements of high population increase, it was not sufficient to sustain them. Moreover, the growth of GDP itself fell in the 1970s. Production in the export-oriented plantation agriculture sector has increased, but adverse terms of trade have reduced the value of the surplus generated from this sector. In the traditional sector, rice production and production of subsidiary food crops have not increased sufficiently to make Sri Lanka independent of food imports.

The existence of reserves and windfalls resulting from favourable terms of trade in the early years, supplemented by some aid, permitted the continuation of the welfare programmes in the 'fifties and the 'sixties. But resources available for sustained investment were limited. Adverse terms of trade in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies and population increase made it difficult to continue all the welfare services, let alone increase investment. The reserves have dwindled and external assistance is still limited. The welfare services are in fact being progressively dismantled, e.g. the halving of the rice ration.

The education system improved literacy and increased people's aspirations. The problem of the kind of education imparted in the system became apparent when youth primarily from the traditional rural areas found themselves unemployed after graduation, and saw few opportunities for absorption in the economy as it existed. The small expansion in the industrial sector failed to provide meaningful employment opportunities because of the inappropriate capital-intensive technology that was employed. Brain drain was symptomatic of the underlying imbalance between the education system and employment possibilities.

Notwithstanding the welfare measures, the fact that nearly every national election since independence saw a change of government in a see-saw fashion indicates a certain popular dissatisfaction with the social process as it has been unfolding. Until 1971, there was a certain passivity among the people and a willingness to work within the established framework. But as the full impact of the free education system began to raise the people's awareness, an attempt was made to force the pace of change. The insurgency of 1971 was but a symptom of the extent of social unrest in the country.

What was wrong?

The approach to development underlying Sri Lanka's policies essentially consisted of (a) maintaining the efficiency of the commercially organized plantation sector and diversifying the economy through establishment of a modern industrial sector, and (b) taxing the modern sector to subsidize the traditional sector and supplementing domestic resources with foreign aid.

For the approach to have worked the surplus in the commercially organized sector had to increase continuously. In fact, this did not happen. The plantation enclaves by their very nature could not generate indefinite additional

surpluses. Further, in an economic system depending on monetary incentives, heavy taxation reduced the rate of return on capital and dampened the ability and motivation for investment. The attempt at rapid industrial development was not successful.

In the traditional sector, the provision of free rice and the price policy resulted in keeping the price at an artificially low level, discouraging production for the market. For the subsistence farmer the urge to produce more was reduced to the extent that he received free rice.

Production relations are such that the masses of producers remain alienated either because they do not own the assets or because decisions are in the hands of bureaucrats.

In the Sri Lanka economy, distribution is separated from production and is handled in such a way that the urge for work and thrift is reduced and material and mental dependency is increased. This alienating social structure is reflected in the political process by a competition between political parties, not in relation to increasing production, but in how much they could give to the people on whose votes they depended.

Twenty-five years of welfare administration has failed to generate a development momentum in Sri Lanka.

5 China

The ideological background

To understand the dialectics underlying the development process of China, it is necessary to trace the ideological background of the Chinese Communist Party. Almost from the beginning, there were 'two lines'. The first line stood for a development philosophy whose basic tenets were the evolution of a collective functioning on the basis of mass democracy, elimination of the 'Three Great Differences' (city versus country, mental versus manual labour, worker versus peasant) and self-reliance. This approach was the economic analogue of the guerilla method of the Chinese Revolution. The other line stood for a highly centralized technocratic guidance of society towards modernization.

In 1949, when the Party took over power throughout China, the two-line struggle remained unresolved; indeed, the inner contradictions were to accentuate further in the face of concrete choices and decisions which had to be made. While the first line was pushing socialism in the countryside, the second, inspired by the Soviet example, emphasized the development of 'modern' industry. For almost a decade the two lines continued to guide the Chinese development in apparently 'non-antagonistic' contradiction. However, the consequences of the second line were: bureaucratization, centralization, pyramidization; relative neglect of local industry and agriculture and consequent shortages of articles of consumption; promotion of urban élitism; and the accentuation, rather than reduction, of the Three Great Differences.

Recognizing that China was moving away from the objective of the revolution, and that continuation of the second line would further

aggravate the situation, Mao Tsetung in 1958 launched the Great Leap Forward, a thrust intended to sharply accelerate the socialization of agriculture, the industrialization of the rural areas and, most importantly, the mobilization of the masses. Agriculture became the 'Foundation' and industry the 'Leading Sector'; China would 'Walk on Two Legs', meaning the simultaneous development of large industry and a decentralized, self-reliant, local industrial sector with labour-intensive techniques.*

The launching of the Great Leap Forward was followed, however, by the 'Three Bad Years', 1959–61, due to (a) the natural calamity created by floods and droughts, (b) the withdrawal of Soviet aid, including equipment, blueprint and personnel, and (c) the fact that the spontaneous mass innovation produced poor quality equipment. The state policy, as a consequence, swung towards the 'second line', bringing in the 'New Economic Policy' which led to the partial restoration of capitalism in agriculture and the re-introduction of capitalistic management and motivation in industry.

By early 1965, the 'two lines' were irreconcilable. The result was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which has asserted the primacy of the first line.

The Chinese leadership recognizes that class struggle continues in the 'transitional period', since classes continue to exist. While the ownership problem may be resolved by socialization of property, as long as the interrelationships among the people and the principle of income-sharing have capitalistic elements, a material basis for class differentiation which reinforces the remnants of the capitalistic mental framework is provided. There are existing and new contradictions amongst the masses themselves, stemming from status, residual private ownership, commodity exchange and pricing mechanism, differential wage system based on work, intra- and inter-regional disparities, etc. Therefore continuous class struggle punctuated by periodic shake-ups and thrusts is considered to be necessary during the transition stage.

The development process which emerged from this ideological background is described in the following sections, which deal with the process of social transformation and mobilization in the rural area. The Annexure describes the morphology of local industry in the post-Cultural Revolution period.

The prelude

The Chinese approach to rural development has been deeply influenced by the course of the Chinese Revolution. Peasants were the base of the revolution, supplying the major part of the human resources for the Party and the Red Army and the safe spatial milieu for the growth of the Party in its infancy; subsequent experience reinforced the mutual confidence and built up a bond based on trust and respect.

The communists assumed national power in 1949 with two decades of local experience behind them, particularly in the Yenan base area, which gave them the confidence that self-reliant development was possible with a total mobilization of the masses. Experimentation had also taught them methods for arousing the

* Though the influence of the development of the urban industrial sector and the linkage between the urban and rural sectors is recognized, an analysis of this wider system is beyond the scope of this study and is not central to the understanding of the rural development process attempted here. We have therefore concentrated on the distinctive features of the Chinese rural development strategy.

masses, gaining the sympathy of a vast majority, and had given them insights into the recruitment and training of local cadres.

It was the approach and attitude derived from almost 30 years of work in the rural areas which provided the framework for the Chinese rural development programme for the next decade.

The first mobilization: land reform (1949–52)

The very first policy thrust of the new government, which in fact started in the liberated areas even before 1949, was thorough land reform which fundamentally altered the asset distribution structure and power and production relationships in the countryside. Generally the approach to land reform was cautious, and while eliminating landlords and benefiting millions of poor peasants, it aimed not to alienate likely allies in the middle-peasant category, so that opposition and disruption during the swift transition period lasting less than four years could be kept at a minimum.

The conduct of the land reform programme demonstrated the importance the regime attached to the *process* of bringing about structural change, even if the latter were crucial and urgent. Nothing would have been easier than carrying out the reform by a simple decree. Instead, the Party chose the occasion for the first nationwide arousal of the masses, using the vehicle of land reform. It opted for a clear policy that reforms were not to be a favour bestowed by a 'benevolent monarch' on the obedient masses. It was to be the people themselves, collectively, who were to examine the problem, evolve a solution and organize themselves to implement the institutional change to the satisfaction of the vast majority. The party cadres were to play only a catalytic role, helping to raise relevant issues and aiding in the systematic conduct of mass meetings to ensure constructive action rather than negative sporadic acts of settling age-old feuds.

While in a large country aberrations and excesses were unavoidable, the basic philosophy of mass-administered reform remained unchanged. The sovereignty of the masses was not easily communicated to a people used to authority, good or bad. Strong measures were required to bring home this philosophy both to the masses and to the cadres, who naturally appeared to many as the representatives of 'authority'. This 'collective emotional shock' was administered by throwing the cadres to the judgement of the masses.[1] The open rectification campaigns of this period were aimed at establishing the right of the masses to judge the 'leaders', to criticize them and even remove them if necessary, thereby introducing their own approach to democracy.

The process of land reform then served not only the obvious purpose of dealing with the basic source of inequality, but sought to liberate the peasants physically and mentally from the old landlords on the one hand and the possible future wielders of authority, the party cadres, on the other. The message of the revolution was thus conveyed to them in the process of their participation in discussion and action. The consciousness generated by this process was to be a crucial factor in the successful functioning of the social institutions which were to follow land reform. These institutions were predicated on the active involvement and participation of the masses in shaping their own environment and programme. The process of land reform was therefore to be the first experience of the peasants in the exercise of democratic decision making.

Another major aim of land reform was the creation of new local cadres with non-authori-

tarian, non-bureaucratic values. The identification, education and testing of new leaders—mainly young—who challenged and defeated the traditional feudal leadership of the village permitted the new order to penetrate the 'natural' village and establish direct links with the masses.

Enhanced consciousness of the masses, a new type of leadership and a democratic relationship between them were the positive fallouts of the process. In economic terms, the net savings ratio rose from 1 to 2 per cent in 1949 to 20 per cent in 1953.[2] It has been maintained at this level since then.

Consolidation, peasant farming and collectivization (1952–5)

Land distribution created millions of small peasant proprietors, possessing in most cases miniscule parcels of uneconomic holdings. Considering the communist approach to production it could not have been their intention to stabilize the structure in this mould, which supports the view that the regime was more concerned at this stage with the process than with the immediate structural outcome. Indeed, in the wake of the land reforms a continuous educational campaign was launched to persuade the peasants to realize the benefits of cooperation with a progressive movement away from private ownership. Again the approach adopted was to encourage discussion and experimentation, which was facilitated by the higher consciousness the masses had acquired during the land reform phase.

However, the gradual pace of voluntary cooperativization of peasant proprietors led to a phenomenal growth of individualistic and capitalistic tendencies among the new and the old proprietors. Considering the struggle to have ended, even some of the cadres, who had also acquired some land, succumbed to the temptation of tending more to their land than to their political responsibilities. Moreover, this development received encouragement from a section of the Party, supporters of the 'second line', who felt that production would benefit by the peasants' new-found enthusiasm to derive maximum gain out of their own land. Even the increase in disparities growing out of the richer or the more enterprising buying up land from the others was not viewed with adequate concern. The forces of degeneration were thus emerging, at the lowest level; thereby, bureaucracy operating at administrative levels removed from the village gradually assumed greater importance.

With the dissipation of mass consciousness and the replacement of village-based party cadres by external bureaucracy, a further retrogression occurred: the traditional leadership began to re-emerge even in the new cooperative institutions, further distorting the objectives of socio-economic development. The bureaucracy, aware that the regime desired cooperativization, and impatient with the painstaking process of education and discussion, at times tended to meet the targets by adopting pressure tactics and even exaggerating the achievements. This again was a reflection at the ground level of the difference within the leadership on the importance of mass democracy.

The second mobilization: the march to the communes (1955–9)

The movement from small mutual aid teams through simple cooperatives, with retention of

the concept of private land ownership, to advanced cooperatives or collectives, with abolition of private ownership, was uneven and at times uncertain. Wherever consciousness was higher and the democratic process operated, the logic of cooperation among an ever increasing number of people in a wider area in an expanding range of activities was indicated by the benefits derived; where bureaucratically imposed nominal organizational structures were erected, exploitation in many forms continued and even intensified with short-term individual gains taking precedence over long-term community benefits.

Economically, the rural sector was in danger of throttling the forces of production; politically, the vast multitude of the country was retrogressing.

Recognizing these dangers, the Party revised its programme in 1955 and, with personal intervention by Mao, greatly accelerated the pace of collectivization, moving within three years to the creation of the people's communes. These were larger units which went beyond agriculture to embrace all other local economic activities, including industries, and furthermore absorbed the entire governmental and party functions and structures in the area to become truly comprehensive self-governing entities.

Reactivation of the party cadre, removal of central bureaucracy from spheres taken over by the commune and the creation of appropriate economic units accompanied by democratic structures at various levels from the village to the commune gave a renewed impetus to the process of mass participation, handing over to the people even greater sovereignty in the management of their affairs and community life. The initiative lost during the phase of vacillating policies was regained and the enthusiasm of the people restored.

The third mobilization: the Great Leap Forward (1958)

Even while the country was being stirred up by the new order brought on by the commune, the leadership embarked on an unprecedented mobilization of the masses which this time was to manifest itself in concrete achievements of collective labour. Massive projects of land shaping and irrigation, while demonstrating the value of cooperation to the participants in visual products, gave the masses concrete issues to be discussed collectively and settled consensually. The very size of the projects made individual thinking irrelevant and insignificant, except as a part of a collective effort.

The Great Leap Forward called on the masses and workers to innovate. There were two reasons for this. Ideology implied the all-round development of the masses, requiring their participation and involvement in all stages of the development process, and a mass-based technology in the countryside was essential to give a real meaning to the concept of mass participation. The second reason was pragmatic: modern technology was just not adequate to carry out industrialization and mechanization of agriculture for lack of capital; but indigenous technology has its limitations and itself had to become 'modern' by successive stages of learning and improvement. The large-scale modern sector was therefore not to be dismantled but was to coexist side by side, and indeed help in the modernization process of the indigenous sector.

The effort to disperse industry in the countryside, though technologically not totally successful, gave the millions of peasants their first direct exposure to science and technology and paved the way for more national decentralization of industry through the policy of 'Walking on Two Legs'.

The pause and partial retreat (1960–64)

Before the benefits of the last mobilization could be consolidated China suffered three years of bad weather and harvests, whose disruptive effect confused and called into question the measures of the last few years. Short-term efforts at raising food production tended to rely on direct economic incentives to individuals, in the form of a reward system based on bureaucratically determined 'work points', increase in the size of private plots and the partial restoration of a free market. The structure of the commune remained, but the supporting democratic process was damaged by the re-creation of bureaucratic machinery and the primacy of individual interests. Collective investments and social development—whose benefits are long term—were retarded. The newly emerging value system was smothered by the throw-back to pre-revolution norms and objectives.

There was intense debate within the Party on the correctness of the 'New Economic Policy' associated with Liu Shao-Chi; the peasants themselves were not all convinced of the direction, having been exposed to other positive experiences in the meanwhile.

The fourth mobilization: the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966)

Seventeen years after the establishment of the People's Republic, and almost a decade after the total structural transformation of the rural society, the overall gains had no doubt been impressive: feudal property relations had been replaced by efficient management units; production had increased substantially; extreme poverty had been eradicated and greater equality achieved; education, health services and communication had improved; partial mechanization of agriculture and supporting industrialization had been introduced. These were major achievements affecting 500 million people.

However, in spite of the repeated efforts punctuated by the three periods of intensive mass mobilization, Mao's primary goal, which was total involvement of the masses, remained fickle and elusive. Sustained self-reliant development, which was the very basis of Chinese strategy, was being subverted by heavy dependence on formal institutions, administrative devices and individualistic incentives. The ascendancy of the 'second line' was at its peak; communist China was at the farthest point from its revolutionary goals enunciated in the Yenan days.

The Cultural Revolution was the massive intervention which sought to reverse the tide and to overcome the negative tendencies accumulated since 1949, arousing the masses against the inhibiting structures, government and party. Criticism, questioning of authority, uninhibited discussion, continuous study, innovation and pride in overcoming adversity to attain self-reliance became the new norms. Moral incentives were stressed, though material incentives continued in a modified form. The effort to eliminate the distinction between those who laboured physically and those who worked in administrative positions, by insisting that all must participate in physical labour, helped to reduce the distance between the two groups and to make the functioning of the commune more democratic.

The commune concept was more explicitly linked to the earlier pre-revolutionary institution of self-sufficient 'red base'. To the extent that a commune was encouraged to become self-reliant, interference with its internal working and programme by external 'authorities'

also lessened, which in turn encouraged a more participatory planning style within the commune, percolating all the way down to the village team. All these processes were mutually reinforcing and had a deep impact on the individuals and the society.

During the decade following the Cultural Revolution, the communes have developed significantly. The basic philosophy and approach have remained unchanged and with experience the method of working has improved. Past experience shows, however, that unless continuous vigilance is maintained, and the ideals reinforced at periodic intervals, the society could again degenerate into routine bureaucratic and mechanical modes, alienating the people.

The Cultural Revolution was not simply a mobilization of the usual type under non-antagonistic contradictions. It was, indeed, the continuation of the Chinese Revolution and its extension into the superstructure. The replacement of the old structure by the new did not result in the automatic replacement of the old superstructure by a new one consonant with the ideals of the revolution. The latter had to be ushered in by the Cultural Revolution.

Annexure: Morphology of local industry

After the Cultural Revolution, the basic line of the Great Leap Forward and 'Walking on Two Legs' was resumed with some modifications. The spontaneous character of the 'mass line' in innovations has been disciplined, and the innovations reduced in size and number. The self-reliance and decentralization policies, however, have been preserved for ideological, natural, technical and strategic reasons: mobilization of the masses and their 'graduation' to a higher ideological level require learning by doing; mountains, rivers and other topographical factors create transportation problems; appropriate technology calls for self-reliant industries based on local resources; and, for military reasons, it is desirable to have self-reliant 'base areas' in the hinterland.

The Chinese believe that the simultaneous development of big, medium and small enterprise makes it possible to bring into full play the initiative at all levels and to draw millions of people into industry. Agricultural mechanization and creation of an industrial activity is emphasized for minimizing transport costs, developing the specific regional resources, and eliminating the 'Three Great Differences'. It is also claimed that both productivity and capital accumulation arguments favour simultaneous development of big, medium and small industries with bias towards the latter at this stage of development. The small industries, due to their flexibility and adaptability, can explore new techniques and many of the indigenous methods, after suitable adaptation, can be used to solve problems of advanced technology.

Characteristics of local industry

Local industries include all industrial branches not attached to the central industrial departments and all industrial enterprises run by provinces, administrative regions, counties, people's communes or production brigades. Some of these industries are also attached to schools and hospitals. Three kinds of local industry have been developed:

1. Process industries: iron and steel, cement, fertilizer and other chemicals. There are more than 1,800 small cement works spread over 60 per cent of the 2,100 counties, with combined output in 1971 exceeding 40 per cent of China's total cement production. In 1972, 60 per cent of total production of chemical fertilizers came from local plants.
2. Agricultural machinery repair and manufacturing network. The network consists of three levels—county, commune and brigade—with the following respective functions: *County*: repair and manufacture; *Commune*: repair and assembly; *Brigade*: repair. By 1971, 90 per cent of the counties had set up the 'three-level network'. This sector produces farm machinery and

equipment needed for agriculture as well as machine tools for the actual production of the machinery.

3. Agricultural and sideline products (light industries): such as flour milling, oil pressing, cotton ginning, yarn spinning, textiles, soya sauce, canned fruit, etc. These are to be seen at county, commune and brigade levels.

Scale and order of establishing local industries are dictated by the following considerations:

1. *Pilot plant approach*. Lack of trained manpower and suitable raw materials dictates setting up pilot plants with small capacity. As time passes, skill, experience and problem-solving capacity are developed. Scale of operation is gradually increased. This avoids colossal wastes characteristic of industrial estate programmes in other underdeveloped countries.
2. *Diversification*. As an industry is set up, it makes possible the release of raw materials from one use to another or absorbs hitherto unused raw materials in a new line. For example, cement and brick production released straw as an input from housing to the paper industry; food plant industry and orchards created the need for bottling; quartz sand was used to start glass plant which not only produced bottles but also electric bulbs, which were not originally planned for but were found practicable without much extra effort. The 'the nose brings ear' law thus creates diversification of industries.

The development of farm-machinery production requires an adequate supply of basic equipment like lathes, grinders, drilling machines, milling machines, etc. to keep the repair work running smoothly. The possession of this advanced equipment makes possible the production of other things without many additional inputs and changes. Steel hammers, sledge hammers, roller bearings, etc. have thus been produced to fulfil orders placed by the state for use either in the national industries or for repair work in other countries. Production of heavy spare parts for the national industries also has become possible. Thus 'subcontracting' seems to have appeared on the scene.

Management

All enterprises have a leading technical group made up of workers, technicians and management personnel. The individual workshops also have their small technical groups. Before equipment is made, 'study visits' are undertaken to plants which have been successful in similar lines and are known for their spirit of thrift and ingenuity. The key note is a meeting, where workers, technicians and management thrash out ideas and arrive at a consensus.

The strong emphasis on small and medium enterprises has meant that almost all the established enterprises have been drawn into the process of transferring technical and managerial skills into the new ones, besides supplying machinery and designing and developing new equipment for the new enterprise. In the process, both gain from the exposure.

Mechanization of agriculture

One of the major purposes of local industrialization is the mechanization of agriculture. As local industry develops, agricultural mechanization proceeds from improved hand tools to horse-drawn earth-moving equipment to power tillers and lastly to tractors. The communes have depended mainly on their own surpluses for the manufacture or purchase of farm equipment. The labour released through mechanization is not being rendered surplus or redundant as in other Third World countries, but is being productively absorbed locally in further intensification of agriculture itself, in building infrastructure and in new industrial activities.

The development of rural industries would not have been possible without the new schooling system and the public health sector. Students, administrators and experts have left the cities and gone to the villages to promote positive attitudes towards modernization. This has also helped to reduce the 'Three Great Differences'. Rural industrialization has brought forth leadership and innovative qualities in participants and their children. Out of all this may evolve a less alienating and more creative process of industrialization that will be better integrated with the living needs of the masses of the Chinese society.

Part Three

Rural Development Strategy

6 Introduction

The lessons

The experiences narrated so far have both negative and positive lessons. In the great bulk of Asia the rural masses are not being liberated. Some governments are trying top-down processes of 'development' that seek to serve the masses through bureaucracies and the rural vested interests, the very agents from whom the rural masses need in fact to be liberated. Central planning and controls have tended to take away initiatives which the rural masses previously had or could have taken, and have thrown them more at the mercy of the above two forces. The result is a continued degeneration of the Asian personality: starving, semi-starving, dehumanized millions; nations, referred to as international basket cases, who have lost their self-respect and sense of their own potentials. The vested interests themselves have lacked the necessary drive—the entrepreneurial quality—to achieve development even on their own terms. The recent awakening to possibilities of the Green Revolution is rather too late: the land/man ratio has deteriorated, and the polarization of society that the Green Revolution would require for most of Asia is no longer a tenable proposition.

On the positive side, serious efforts are being made in China to restore creative initiative and collective self-respect in the rural society. The course has not been smooth and resistance has often caused it to veer. But the experiences of a quarter century are instructive.

Evidence is available to show that what has been possible in China is not specific to its own historical course, which in fact was as dismal as any until conscious and determined human action altered it; the impulses in Bangladesh are knocks at the door; the Santhal Movement in India has been even more assertive. These efforts will not develop into a national force without appropriate leadership, which has to guide the masses into effective political power. This, therefore, is the precondition.

Asian nations, stuck in deep mud as they are, need a massive redirection and thrust to lift up the wheels and set them moving again. For this the initiative must be taken by the masses. This means realization of the concept of full democracy, which seeks to give the substance of political power to the rural masses in shaping their lives.

Masses defined

Masses may be defined for our purpose as those who do not have any power in society derived from property, wealth, religion, caste, expertise, office or such other sources not widely shared. For Asian societies the concept broadly overlaps with the landless and the land-poor in the countryside and the working class in the towns, save those elements of these classes who may enjoy special status by virtue of extra-economic attributes (e.g. the Brahmin). Thus defined, the rural masses constitute some 70 to 80 per cent of the population in Asia and must, therefore, together be the main driving force for transforming society.

Masses, leadership and democracy

The emergence of mass initiative cannot be spontaneous in societies where the rural masses have become objectively and subjectively dependent on élitist rule; it has to be steered by a committed leadership with very special qualities.

This leadership must represent the masses in a genuine sense and be committed to their

liberation as its primary task. Genuine representation, like the very concept of participatory democracy which we have discussed, implies much more than formal voting into power once every few years. It requires instead integration of the leaders with the masses through a systematic sharing of lives. They must have mass involvement in the task of steering social change. Commitment in turn requires that the leadership uses its position and power neither for personal or factional privileges nor to accomplish glamorous tasks for their own sake, but tests all policy alternatives and actions from the point of view of their impact on the lives of the masses. It also requires that the leadership systematically submits ideas and actions for critical examination by the masses in a continuous dialogue with the latter, so that the ideas of the masses form an organic part of the thought process of the leadership itself. It requires, above all, commitment to full participatory democracy at the grass-roots level, and bridging of the 'consciousness gap' between the leadership and the masses so that the masses become progressively less dependent on consciousness external to their own lives.

The perspective

The process of such a leadership (a party) coming into power can be discussed only in the concrete and cannot be generalized. For each country this will rest on its specific internal, geo-political and global context, and also on the creative strategy to be adopted by the mass-rooted party against resistance to its ascendance into power.

Once a genuinely mass-rooted leadership does come into power the tasks before it will be formidable, and a perspective for action will be necessary. Historical experiences available to date (some of them reviewed in Part Two) suggest certain fundamental considerations, broad principles and a direction for effort that may be worth keeping in view. In the following three chapters some of these are spelled out, insofar as they relate to the dynamic questions of social transformation (Chapter 7), principles of institution building (Chapter 8) and a tentative sketch of the organizational structure of society (Chapter 9) that may emerge from an effort at social transformation in broad accord with the direction visualized in this study.

Chapter 10 conceptualizes the need for action research to probe the dynamics of mass consciousness at any stage of history.

It may be noted that what is outlined in the following chapters is not intended to be prescriptive; if it were, this would militate against the very methodology of our study. The concrete strategy and actions that will be taken by a mass-rooted leadership after it comes into political power, and the specific sequence in which the various steps will be taken, will be country-specific and original; their choice will be circumscribed by the historical evolution of the specific society and the world-historical context in which it finds itself; their time sequence will be governed by the inner dynamics of evolution of the new social order. These, therefore, can neither be prescribed nor predicted. But considerations suggested by history as it has been are valuable in providing a framework for scientific choice of policies, and at any point in time scientific choice requires a perspective however tentative it may be. This perspective itself is a matter of voluntary choice; but such voluntary choice, as also the choice of more specific policies to be taken in response to specific circumstances that will

unfold as a result of interaction between historical forces and ex-post voluntary choice and action, can only be the more enlightened the more lessons are taken from history.

While the principles outlined in the following three chapters would be of immediate operational interest to societies where a mass-rooted leadership has actually come into power, those concerned and working for the liberation of the rural masses in other societies at different stages of historical evolution also need a vision of the direction of possibilities and the problems involved in steering a major redirection of society. Though the formal ascendance of mass power constitutes a critical point in the process of social evolution, the process itself is in a sense continuous: what can be done and will be done after mass-rooted leadership comes into power will be determined among other things by what the society inherits at that point. The course of all major social transformations has in this sense been circumscribed by this heritage: the specific character of the Chinese Revolution as distinct from the Soviet, for example, has its roots in the distinctive evolution of Chinese society from the ancient days. To the extent that the scope of voluntary human action exists in all stages of history within the orbit circumscribed by history, those concerned with social change in countries which have not yet matured for a major social transformation may also benefit by absorbing the experience of societies far advanced in the process of transformation. With this perspective as an input, and an understanding of the concrete conditions of the country in question as the base, the leadership will form its own vision of the future and accordingly chart its own course of action. In this sense, for these latter countries also, such a perspective as is attempted in the following chapters is necessary.

The analysis as presented here deals with the resolution of the more antagonistic conflicts seen in the task of social transformation from historical experiences. The trend that thus emerges has been extrapolated into an ideal construct.

7 Transforming Society

A dialectical process

Conventional development thinking assumes a conflict-free social framework for change. Policies are suggested to 'get us there'. But reality is different. Until identity between the individual and the collective is complete, any policy will benefit some and hurt others. There is in this sense no 'painless' path to change. This is true even of so-called 'Pareto-superior' moves, which also frustrate individual aspirations if these are not identical with collective goals. Those who would thus be 'hurt' would naturally resist. It then becomes a struggle, a process of pushing through resistance, a process essentially dialectical.

A leadership rooted in the masses has therefore to discern forces for and against social change in order to evolve its strategy, if and when it assumes formal power.

The odds will be heavy. The old exploiters of the masses will work for an opportunity to

recapture power; the élitist 'middle class' will be unwilling to adjust to a drastic scaling down of privileges; and archaic social cultures that characterize so much of Asia—fatalism, castes, taboos, the dependence of women on men—will not dissolve easily. The new leadership itself may not have the experience in economic and social administration fully appropriate to its new mobilizational role; this depends on how much time and opportunity it had to experiment with its ideas before coming to power. It may, for instance, need the services of sections of the former vested interests to the extent that their experience and skill remain strategic in keeping production from collapsing; the greater the extent of 'modernization' in the economy until then, the more necessary this will be. Resulting concessions to the vested interests, in terms of positions and material privileges, would make them to that extent stronger.

The new leadership itself, including its cadres, may not be fully homogeneous in terms of values, attitudes and strength of character. Hangovers from élitism, bureaucratic administrative styles, traditional respect for narrow specialists, etc. may be present in various degrees in its consciousness and subconsciousness. The rural masses, in their turn, would be dependent on directives from above by tradition. A continuation of such a sense of dependence would provide the opportunity for élitist attitudes of leaders and cadres to take root again and develop. The glamour of 'modern' technology, efficient only in the context of economically more advanced societies, would not die out easily; this in turn would strengthen the pull towards narrow professionalism, élitism and hierarchical-bureaucratic administration. Furthermore, heightened aspirations about possibilities of the new leadership may give correspondingly less time to experiment and learn from mistakes: to many even among its own ranks an élitist style of administration would appear ready-made and would seem to work; the alternatives might be little more than a philosophy until given concrete practical content, which would need to be developed through live experimentation in dialectical confrontation with the old order. Finally, the larger the society to be transformed the more difficult the task of transformation will be, through such strong resistance.

On the positive side is the failure of the old system and of its change-agents. The greater this failure, the more will people look forward to a total change. The oppressed groups in society have little to lose, and they are the majority. The deeper the leadership is rooted in them, the greater is its power to mobilize them. The masses would be prepared to follow a leadership whose personal integrity is visible and who not merely promises, but practises, a system that works in the open and is seen to be just. There would be other patriotic forces in various walks of life, frustrated at the degeneration of social personality and seeking fulfilment in assisting change. Visible demonstration of the commitment of leadership will attract many of them. The youth relatively unspoiled as yet by the corrupting influence of society have a potential which can be harnessed. The progressive role of youth in other societies inspires them. Many of them are socialized in schools, in the playground and in other associations, and are thus malleable to group stimuli to serve society. The process of the new leadership's coming into power itself can be an asset-building force. The longer and more difficult this process, and the greater the depth of mass involvement, the greater will be its contribution: the creation of mass consciousness; training of the leaders in mass mobilization; disciplining and hardening the peo-

ple; testing commitment of leaders and setting new standards for leadership; and building up cadres with leadership qualities in various degrees.

Many of these positives remain, nevertheless, imponderables against the more solid, deep-rooted, odds. In the ultimate analysis, the inspirational power of a committed leadership over the masses is the last resort. This requires exemplary personal conduct by the leadership, a power to galvanize the masses into collective action, and the ultimate ability to retain their trust and support them through possible setbacks. This is easier perhaps for a smaller society, where a committed leadership can remain in systematic physical contact with the masses and keep the latter inspired. For larger societies alternative methods to substitute the 'physical cult' would be necessary. This makes the ability to communicate and inspire through non-physical means—the newspaper, radio, books, etc.—an asset of considerable importance.

Fundamental considerations

In the face of such deep-rooted and powerful resistance as outlined above, small efforts are bound to fail. Evidence is clear from history that gradualist and piecemeal efforts at social change, even if genuinely motivated, backslide into the hands of the vested interests. There must be a critical minimum effort to gain ground at all. The greater the resistance, the greater must be the very important first *thrust*. This indeed is the logical substance of the 'revolutionary' as distinguished from the 'reformist' approach.

A thrust in the context of social change is defined as a determined move to smash impediments to change and to redirect the orientation of society. It is by conception indifferent to second-order considerations. It destroys, but does not by itself create institutions. The latter is the task of *consolidation*, which trims the new and emerging social relations of their excesses, and knits them in a systematic institutional framework. Subsequent thrusts will be needed to take society on to a still higher level of collective life and consciousness. Forces of resistance will themselves regroup and reappear in different forms after initially losing ground. To combat them again, more thrusts will be necessary.

While consolidation differs in concept from the thrust, its foundation is laid in the very method employed for the latter. Social change is not a discrete sequence of target-attaining, but a continuous process where the ends are inseparable from the means. A change which appears 'progressive' in the abstract may nevertheless alienate the masses further, or give them distorted interests in it, if it is accomplished by, say, a bureaucratic method. For this reason the method employed for the thrust, and for that matter for any change, must be so chosen as to naturally generate the desired institutions and cultures.

Liberation is also inhibited rather than helped if change is ahead of mass consciousness. For change to be accomplished by the masses and serve its liberating purpose, the masses must be subjectively ready for it. Consciousness may be latent and can be roused; but if so, it has to be roused before action is initiated. Consciousness requires, however, living experience interacting with *reflection* (as distinguished from *feeling*) and collective deliberation, without which action might be 'spontaneous' and prone to rashness.

Of the many tasks of liberation two are basic. One is to destroy dominance/dependence

relations in the society. Age, sex and land relations are the three major dominance/dependence relations in oppressed Asia; in India the caste and the joint family system are also of the same category.

The dominance has to be broken by rousing the dependents collectively against the dominants. Individually the dominated is weak and susceptible to manipulation. The dominance has to be broken both structurally and psychologically, i.e. by enthusing the spirit of self-reliance among the traditionally dominated.

In breaking a dominance/dependence relation the specific oppressed group must take the initiative. However, elements from other oppressed groups may have greater understanding and sympathy than the rest, and so may be valuable allies in the liberation. In particular the youth, often oppressed by the aged and seeking to express and assert itself, may be found ready to respond to the call of a committed leadership in order to help mobilize other oppressed groups, and thus to break corresponding relations of dominance and dependence.

The other basic task is liberation from the narrowness of individualistic thinking (see Chapter 1) and the creation of the collective spirit. The sense of community still prevails in pre-capitalist Asian agriculture on which the rural collective may be built. But in daily life individualism has already taken root, save in some tribal and semi-tribal communities. This necessitates the raising of collective consciousness first through less formal, but not less intense, collective activities before institutionalizing the collective. The process of raising such consciousness starts with the very thrust towards breaking the dominance/dependence relations which we have indicated is a collective action.

Mobilization: land reform

Land is the primary source of income and wealth in rural Asia. Inequality in the distribution of land is therefore the primary source of inequality in income, wealth and hence power. There cannot be genuine democracy in a framework of polarized land ownership.

Exploitation through land ownership is felt directly to the extent that a peasant personally harvests his product and hands over a share of it in kind or cash to the landowner. This is a dominance/dependence relationship that is on or near the frontier of consciousness already. Indirect exploitation of the land-poor and landless by the land-rich takes place through the latter's social and political power, and also through their command over economic staying power (working capital for the peasant's subsistence during process of production, reserve capital for contingencies, etc.). The result is not only the mass misery seen in such societies; the poor peasant is also alienated from work itself, which as we have noted is natural to man and gives him pleasure and fulfilment.

Rural development cannot be said to have begun without land reform. This by itself is hardly in dispute today, and almost every government in Asia has promised it. But governments essentially representing landed interests have accomplished little. There have been motions without action, legislation with loopholes, appeals to lack of records. Vested interests cannot liquidate themselves.

Indeed, a test of mass-based leadership for rural Asia is whether it launches a genuine land reform programme as its first major thrust. Delay will not only retard the process of mass liberation, it will give the landed interests time to manipulate and dilute the very power base of the leadership. The problem of records will be the easiest one to solve: the

masses know the facts and mass meetings are all that will be needed to collect them.

Land reform offers a powerful instrument for release of mass initiative if it is carried out through mass action and not imposed from above. The masses must be asked to come together to deliberate and decide how they want to redistribute land. This will give them valuable social education and help to train them in the new task of collective administration; conflicting claims arising out of heterogeneity of the masses will have to be faced and resolved. Thus the process of land reform will be as important as the reform itself.

Land reform through mass action will be, as it is intended to be, an intense experience in the collective life of the rural masses. For the first time in ages they will feel that real power is theirs, and they can collectively accomplish what has long been promised but denied them. The real foundation for building the collective spirit is thereby laid: this cannot be taught by preachings, but has to be learnt through experience in real life. An opportunity is also given for other dominance/dependence relations to be shaken up: women and youth, the low castes, even the children will be in the thick of this experience, which will shock them emotionally and help to remove deep-seated inhibitions in their minds as well. The shock will lay the foundation of new social relations even outside the framework of land, in the field and in the family in daily life. Subsequent thrusts to break the other dominance/dependence relations will thus be made easier.

Mobilization: collectivization

While in Asian rural societies the sense of community in broad terms still prevails, the peasants may still have a strong desire to own land individually. It would be undialectical to ignore this possible contradiction and to attempt collectivization straight from such a position. On the other hand, individual land ownership, however equitable the distribution initially, tends to backslide into inequalities in income and even in land ownership, and such economic polarization breeds polarization of power as well. For this reason, rural mass power may not be sustained for long under individual land ownership—the source of spontaneous capitalism.

Collective ownership of land is also needed for deploying land and technology, exploiting economies of scale, and for the fullest possible mobilization of mass labour for building the economic infrastructure necessary for rapid economic growth. Under individual ownership the benefits of such collective self-employment will mainly be seen in narrow individual terms and will often be doubted. Thus work will remain undone while labour will remain idle.

For all these reasons steps should be taken early towards subjective preparation of the peasants for collectivization, by introducing cooperative and collective work of various types, demonstrations of collective farming, and social analysis and education thereon in mass meetings.

Mobilization: building infrastructure

Although sustained collective self-employment to the fullest extent possible may not be obtained until ownership of property is collectivized, a great deal can be done after land reform. Inspiring leadership has mobilized people for voluntary work even under less equitable property relations, the ethics of which may however be questioned. After an

egalitarian land reform through collective action that energizes the masses the possibilities are greater, and the equity question less serious, particularly if subsequent collectivization is eventually visualized. In fact, collective self-employment is itself a method of raising consciousness and thus enhances subjective preparation of the masses for collective ownership.

While land reform shakes up the property relations, the construction of massive irrigation channels, dikes and dams, land reclamation and land shaping shakes up individualism which otherwise might persist after land reform. A new culture of collective labour is created, and what is possible by mass action and with little 'capital' is demonstrated. An effective irrigation channel or a dam turns a barren land green or a flood land into a granary; the masses have done this with their own hands, working together as they have never done before, at the call of a leadership that is their own, and everyone—the leaders, the school teacher and the students, the village doctor, even the women who have always been in purdah—have worked with them. There have been festivities, singing and dancing, as the work has proceeded, and the loudspeaker has continuously reported on what is happening where, who is doing what and what is to be done now, creating and maintaining a sense of unity so that no one feels isolated. An environment is in fact created where not to participate in the collective work is itself terrible isolation.

A single catalytic project like the above, massive in size and bold in imagination, would go a long way in stirring up the collective spirit of the masses while at the same time cementing the bond between the masses and the leadership that conceives and guides them into it with living fellowship. The gains thus reaped may then be consolidated in mass meetings to discuss and analyse what has happened and how it has happened, and where the masses would like to go from here. New mass institutions of decision making, evaluation and vigilance would already have germinated in the field; new cadres would have been thrown up and the commitment and abilities of old cadres tested further. With careful handling by the leaders, the masses themselves would consolidate the new experience and move forward.

A fundamental value to be created through all this is self-reliance. The importance of doing it the hard way from the very beginning cannot be overemphasized. Shock projects should be chosen that have traditionally waited for state patronage and money, or looked impossible, and yet are within the means of a roused and mobilized community. State patronage has often destroyed traditional practices for collective work, such as the building or maintenance of public utilities, or the caring for community property (e.g. tanks), which would not be done any longer because the state was supposed to do it. Withdrawal of the 'benevolent' state is therefore a prerequisite for bringing back collective self-reliance. The masses should be asked to deliberate on what they can give, instead of merely receiving. Such achievements should be highlighted nationally. Within the community, the pride should be shared among all groups—men, women, youth, the old and the children—so that it can be sustained by mutual reinforcement.

The mobilization of women is another important task. A society cannot be liberated unless its women are liberated. They are half of the working population, the first educators of the children, and doubly oppressed. Talk of population control without the liberation of women is naive. Women cannot be liberated

unless they, too, become self-reliant economically and emotionally. As we have suggested, involving them in shock collective projects will itself serve as a liberator of minds. But more will be needed in the way of organizing them to deliberate upon, assert and wrest their rights.

Remoulding the élites

The leadership needs a machinery to reconstruct society. Part of this is provided by the cadres of its own ranks. New cadres are also created as reconstruction proceeds. But more are needed as social life has so many sectors and divisions, spatial and functional.

The élites of the old society have their expertise. This may often be of the wrong kind, as it might not be based on living knowledge of society's needs and possibilities. The 'élitist culture' is by itself divisive and produces distorted values. The more the inherited élites are prepared to remould themselves, the greater their utility to the new society. This means wanting to be useful to the masses on the latter's terms, and sharing life's hardship with them.

Here is another area where a determined programme is necessary. Postponement and gradualism will be counter-productive and will only strengthen resistance. A massive go-to-the-village thrust so that the urban élites may participate in the process of land reform, mass infrastructure building, technology dissemination, literacy drive, etc. should be an integral component of the early shake-ups. The accent should be on sharing the villagers' lives, including working physically with them, becoming useful to them and acceptable as one of them, and learning from them. Elitist tendencies will need to be constantly watched and exposed for discussion and corrective action in public rather than suppressed. The fuller the exposure of the forces at work, the more complete and permanent will be their destruction, and the greater will mass consciousness and vigilance against their subtleties become.

The much-awaited technological transformation of rural Asia requires first and foremost a transformation of attitudes and methods in technological research, adaptation and dissemination. The strategy as we have stated has to be inner directed. This presupposes an inward-looking attitude: a technology is good not because it is being used in an 'advanced' country, but because it fits into the resource and cultural setting of the society concerned. Specific choices are matters of concrete options; but appropriate choices cannot start being made until attitudinal biases against mass-oriented technology (in the sense of what the masses can understand and adopt as part of their daily lives), and technology that looks less glamorous but uses local resources more fully, including the massive unskilled manpower, are eliminated.

Such technology choice cannot be made in isolation from mass life; if it were, the nuances of mass culture and the felt needs and adaptability of the masses would be missed. The thrust for go-to-the-village movement is for this reason particularly strategic for the society's technological experts. Once there, they will also find how much they have to learn from the villagers themselves, by way of simple and effective technological devices which they would not have thought of in alien environments. It would then be their task to improve upon such innovations using their advanced scientific knowledge and to encourage the villagers to innovate further.

In each country much technological know-how is available that is appropriate to local

conditions but not widely known. Programmes for quick dissemination of available technology can and should be undertaken for (a) the increase of agricultural output from given land and water increase in the local production of agricultural inputs such as manures, and (b) the absorption of spare local labour (of men, women and children) in domestic and small agro-based industries.

Official extension agencies may have existed in old societies for the dissemination of technology, but may have accomplished little because of wrong orientation. The size of the job itself, to achieve a massive and quick spread of available technology, calls for devising unconventional and economical methods.

The village school and college, the youth club, the newspaper and the radio are some institutions that can be used for this task. For instance, the technology can be communicated easily to the more literate youth in the village school and college, who may be given the responsibility of taking it to all the families in the village. Newspapers and radios can pour out details of the know-how daily, news far more important than much of what is traditionally served, mostly for the consumption of the urban élites. Young people are inquisitive by nature, and involving them in the dissemination of technological know-how will naturally arouse their creative interest for innovations.

Such changes in attitudes and methods and the choice of appropriate technology—rather than the imitation of foreign technology per se—should be considered the very important first 'technological revolution' in Asia.

Finally, the education system: modern education in most Asian countries has come to mean a systematic process of alienation between the student and rural life. The purpose of education has been to create a middle class to serve the state and the capitalist sector of the economy. To come out of the rut of rural life while leaving the rural society behind has been used as the basic motivation for schooling. Contempt for manual labour has been built into the education system.

This functionally irrelevant and socially parasitic education system must be uprooted. Education cannot be separated from life and yet be useful to life. The best school is life itself. One has to be in the thick of it and be given the scientific-analytical equipment and world-historical perspective to understand and contribute to it. For this, major educational reform is called for.

The change cannot come easily. The problem is made difficult by its sheer size and the long gestation period for producing teachers: there are so many to educate, and where does one get the new teachers? Even China, 17 years after the communist takeover, preceded by 15 years of base area work in integration with the rural masses, had a disastrous record to show in 1962 in its seats of higher learning:

> One of the major consequences of the re-emphasis on professionalism was a reduction in the number of university students from worker and peasant families and a corresponding increase in those from the families of senior cadres and the 'exploiting classes' ... Thus at Peking University the number of students from worker and peasant families fell from nearly 67 per cent in 1958 to only 38 per cent in 1962, while the number of students of 'exploiting class' background more than doubled. Many of the university's professors were contemptuous of proletarian students, referring to them as 'coarse teacups not amenable to fancy carving' and resenting the fact that such students had obtained university places by means of 'political ladders'. Of 237 students admitted to the eight departments of natural science in 1958 only 45 graduated with their original class, the others having been expelled or held back ...

At Peking Technical College more than 800 of the 919 cadres and military men sent there as students were 'weeded out', as were 200 at Tringhua. Of 108 students expelled from Peking Commercial College, some 94 per cent were of working class origin ... Han Suyin, a well informed and favoured visitor to China, has written (1967): 'Investigations into the universities and senior middle schools in the cities provided a shock; after seventeen years of socialist China, over 40 per cent of the students were still from bourgeois, landlord, and capitalist families, even if these were only five per cent of the population'.[1]

Obviously, the soft attitude towards the teachers in China and the expectation that they would embrace the new outlook easily if only sent to the village periodically were ill-founded, and while the revolution was busy handling the more visible problems, a quiet counter-revolution of fundamental and long-run importance was gaining ground. The re-emphasis of professionalism perhaps provided only a cover for getting rid of proletarian students against whom prejudices among the élitist teaching community seem to have been deep and unshaken.

With such evidence available now from the Chinese experience, a correct choice of leadership for educational reform should be of fundamental importance. The problem will be less acute to the extent that progressive intellectuals, taking their lesson from history, will start remoulding themselves and reorienting the education system as early as they can, even before a mass-rooted leadership takes over power. If they cannot in this sense stay ahead of the political process their usefulness to the new order when it comes will be limited; many amongst them will feel alien to it, and may want to subvert rather than promote it.

In the meanwhile, the new education process must also be started. Hope will perhaps lie in socialized student groups coming from the more oppressed families and not yet spoilt by privileges. Collective involvement in efforts at transforming society and in economic and social processes of daily life of the rural masses, and collective self-study of life thus experienced by such groups, would seem to offer a more promising method for generating the new educational order and its new teachers than reliance on the good faith of the traditional teachers.

8 Building Institutions

The need

In the previous chapter we have discussed the thrusts which are necessary to transform the rural society in the direction of the ideals which have been set out. It was also mentioned that such thrusts destroy the old and lay the foundation for the new; on this foundation new institutions are to be built and consolidated. And yet, social transformation is not a one-time effort; it requires many thrusts and is in fact a never-ending process, which means that institutions too are not to be immutable.

The question may be raised: if it was possible to carry out actions like land reform or land shaping without formal institutions, using

mass meetings as decision forums, what necessitates formalization now?

The conventional response to such questioning is the need to have a 'contractor' type of 'neat' organization, an impersonal legal entity which conducts the affairs of the community with 'managerial efficiency', with a clear division of responsibility and without confusion. We disagree with such a notion of institutions.

Institutions, in our view, perform the same function for a collective as a memory does for an individual: providing awareness and actuality of continuous existence, which is necessary for progress and evolution.

Further, they are the instruments through which a collective acts—applying its consciousness and faculties to change its environment, and in the process developing further its consciousness and faculties. On the other hand, mass meetings by themselves are discontinuous events and the collective is not 'represented' between meetings; institutions provide this link in time, connecting the past, the present and the future, and a link in space, connecting one group with another, horizontally and vertically. This link is provided by the delegation of authority by the masses to individuals and groups. Together then, *mass meetings* (*all* the people *some* of the time) and institutions (*some* of the people *all* the time) are the formal expression of a *collective*.

Creation of a collective personality is one of the most important tasks before a mass democracy. It represents a higher stage of human evolution, rising above narrow individualistic striving which formed the basis of the old society. Institutions, as expressions of this personality, the new living cells, giving the society an organic unity and replacing the mechanical 'efficiency' of the old system, should therefore be carefully nurtured.

The dangers

There is, however, a contradiction between the movement for change and the need for stability. It is during the periods of consolidation and institutionalization that elements of resistance to change regroup and find pretexts to backslide, with the ostensible purpose of trimming the excesses. There is a tendency to routinization which obstructs further change and partially or totally nullifies the progress already made. Even China, as we have described, has passed through periods of stifling institutionalization, requiring further massive thrusts to break the confining mould.

In fact, like individual memory, institutions suffer from inertia, tending to preserve the past heritage and patterns. They tend to acquire a need, a logic and a method of work of their own and, once disassociated from the people, quickly degenerate and become destructive of the very reason for their existence. They legitimize resistance and encourage negative tendencies, thereby alienating the people who then withdraw to their private pursuits, paying only the minimum necessary obeisance to the collective. A supportive system is thus converted into a predatory structure.

Care should be taken to minimize these dangers inherent in institutionalization. Form should not *precede* content: institutions should be allowed to evolve naturally out of a collective need and urge to work together, and the concrete experience of collective action and deliberation thereon. Experiences elsewhere and systematized knowledge should also be taken into account. Even institutions thus formed need constant vigilance. The people have to be aware of the possible dangers, watch their functioning critically, discuss collectively and apply the necessary correctives. At the primary level this vigilance is possible

directly by the masses. At higher levels,* where functions are delegated to representative bodies, direct mass vigilance is not generally possible, although some may be exercised through formal and informal bodies operating at the same level, e.g. bodies representing groups like women, youth and workers. However, these bodies, also being institutions, suffer from the same basic contradictions. The conclusion is inescapable that the struggle has to continue and the top leadership has to be committed to total mass democracy to take periodic measures to submit actions of all such institutions and their functionaries to mass scrutiny.

The logical corollary of an evolutionary process is that there can be no blueprint of an ideal institution which can be duplicated everywhere. An institution, as expression of collective personality, evolves out of collective action, experience and decision; it is therefore specific to each collective and cannot be transferred to another locale. The best that the leadership can do is to introduce new thought for change and encourage an intensive exchange of experience between various collectives in the process of institutionalization, leaving the decisions to the people.

The guiding principles

An evolutionary process does not imply, however, that institutions can develop without an inner logic and accountability to the society as a whole. As they evolve, they must continuously test themselves against the five basic principles of development as mentioned earlier.

We have examined the issue of the *development of man* while discussing the individual and the collective in Chapter 1, and have stated that the collective exists to the extent that the individuals acquiesce in its sovereignty, a principle which is built into the evolutionary process. This implies that if the collective is imposed on the individuals, they would be alienated and their growth would be inhibited.

Three other factors which *alienate* the individuals from the institution are: the size of the collective, its style of administration and the use of technology.

The size of the primary unit has to be such that an individual can feel a part—and an effective part—of it. Large monolithic organizations become impersonal and the individual cannot identify himself with anything tangible. The smaller groups can of course be linked together, as groups, into larger organizations for bigger tasks. In fact, mass meetings and informal collective work programmes may involve a large number of people and yet, instead of alienating, may promote solidarity; but while institutionalizing, a start should be made with small comprehensible groups.

Institutions by their very nature create 'office', and office has traditionally been associated with status, prestige and glamour of its own, regardless of the function. The aura surrounding the office tends to attract and distract the best of people and draws them away from actual work, resulting in continuous tension within themselves and in the organization. This is then reflected in the institution's style of work: bureaucratic, technocratic, over-specialized and mystified. There is a tendency to complicate work so that people can no longer comprehend it, abdicate their decision-making responsibilities and leave it to full-time functionaries. These functionaries in turn, whether administrative or technical specialists, try to

* A multi-tier institutional structure is described in Chapter 9.

build up the status of the office either at the cost of productive work or by over-glorifying mental work. Both are alienating.

In many historical situations, administration has been conceived as separate from and above social life. This has created vested interests in administration oriented to growth of the administrative apparatus unrelated to social needs. Preoccupation has been centred on forms (disposal of files, reporting, committee meetings) rather than action. Secrecy and specialization have mystified the administrative processes and alienated the masses from them. Within the administrative system rigid hierarchies have created distorted values and worked against spirited team effort.

At the grass-roots level the fundamental task is to help the people administer themselves. There is no room here for an exclusive cadre of 'administrators' who monopolize administration. The masses themselves are, collectively, the administrators who take decisions, implement them, evaluate them and exercise necessary vigilance. The leaders, and the 'link-cadres', guide the masses, drawing their attention to relevant issues which they may not yet have thought about.

The youth, who have great potential as change-agents, should be integrated as a special force in administering the new society. Maintaining the youth in a state of social awareness, conscious of their own power and responsibility to break impediments and lead society, and keeping them socialized for collective deliberation is the way to make sure the future wins. The Katchubari-Kristapur literacy feat in Bangladesh was administered by the village youth, even small children, in a way professional administrators could never think of. The best approach to population control may be to entrust a major responsibility to high-school girls in the village as a body. They will know how to create the *movement* that stirs up the society.

A related factor in alienating people is the use of technology beyond the comprehension of the people at a particular stage, and therefore requiring technicians and experts who are quite distinct from the masses. Technicalization at the local level should be built up with emphasis on the people understanding, acquiring and even innovating on the technology which then becomes their own. The role of a specialist is to prepare the people to internalize knowledge and not just to run the machine for them. The tasks undertaken by the collective therefore should progress from technically simple to complex, as the people become ready for them.

Design of the institutions and the process of their working should be geared to the emergence of *collective personality*: they must encourage and generate the spirit of the collective as we have defined it in Chapter 1. Thus the rules of office, their interconnection and the functioning of the institution as a whole should not be such as to encourage individuals and groups to think in terms of personal gains in the 'animalistic' sense; they must stimulate the desire to contribute to the collective and the collective process of decision making. The emergence of the collective personality is directly dependent on the value premises on which it is predicated and which in turn determine its system of work allocation and evaluation, its distribution principles, its method of motivation and incentives, and, as a result of these operational intermediators, the initiative the people take and the pride they feel in the institution.

In designing the rules, the institutions may at times go ahead of the state of mass consciousness and require mid-course correction. This, however, is to be distinguished from re-

versal of policies resulting from forces of resistance gaining ascendancy in the system. The example of China during the five years preceding the Cultural Revolution in 1966 is an example of a collective institutional shell, the commune, being used to encourage again various forms of individualistic behaviour with bureaucratic work allocation, piece-work payment, steep financial incentives and phenomenal increase in the size of the private plot. The commune itself started emphasizing profits as a measure of efficiency, restoring the spirit of capitalism. The value system which backed this policy lacked sufficient faith in people and found coercion and temptations the major instruments for promoting production. It is in the reversal of this policy since 1966 that the restoration of the spirit of the collective was sought.

The working of *mass democracy* is the basic tenet of the approach to rural development which we have discussed here. Institutions are a major vehicle to give operational content to the democracy, for democracy cannot be practised in the abstract and must be related to concrete day-to-day tasks which are performed collectively. Planning, implementation and evaluation of these specific actions are among the functions of mass democracy.

At the primary unit level, frequent (weekly?) mass meetings are the formal forums of democracy and the unit should be compact and cohesive enough to permit these meetings. All functionaries would be accountable to this general assembly for actions taken in the interval, which would be subject to review, criticism and modification.

At higher levels, meetings would be attended by elected representatives, but these should also be open to the public in order to prevent an air of secrecy; public administration must also be administration in public. The representatives should be rotated, so that there is no danger of the formation of an élite group. They should also report the deliberations of higher level forums to their constituents at the mass meetings and should seek their views on the various issues and plans.

Demystification of tasks and functions, accountability to the masses and the promotion of a non-élitist leadership ethic are the prerequisites of a functioning mass democracy which an institution should be designed for.

None of the above guiding principles would be purposeful—or would even be fully practicable—if the institution were not anchored on the principle of *self-reliance*. For instance, practising mass democracy and self-administration requires autonomy; it is hard to imagine autonomy for institutions which are continuously seeking outside help. Internally, self-reliance would generate collective and individual self-respect, which is the precondition for the development of an individual and of the collective personality.

It is important, therefore, that the institution should lay stress on self-reliance throughout its process of evolution. A compromise with this principle in the early stages in the interest of expediency would distort the value system, which would be difficult to correct at a later stage. The masses must constantly be encouraged to recognize their own creative and fighting powers and to solve their own problems instead of looking for soft options.

Apart from these aspects of self-reliance, there are also sound techno-economic reasons to promote self-reliance—though not autarky—as a method of maximum utilization of local human and material resources (see Chapter 5).

The 'link-cadre'

We have referred to the crucial and unique role which has to be played by the leadership and the cadres in the entire process of rural development, from mass mobilization to institution building to the satisfactory operation of the institutions in a democratic manner. However appropriate the approach to development, and however serious the national leadership may be in implementing the policy, success will depend to a large extent on the sincerity and the ability of the cadre in mobilizing the masses into an effective collective.

The lesson from all successful rural development efforts, whether in isolated pockets as in India and Bangladesh or in a national programme as in China, is that capable and dedicated individuals have a major role to play in energizing the people to undertake tasks which they themselves may not have thought possible. These motivated persons have worked neither through authority nor through highly specialized skills, but through personal involvement and example. For instance, the dynamism of some of the projects in Bangladesh which we have described is due to the promoters' ability to inspire the people through dedication and living fellowship; in China the revolutionary process has generated such leadership on a phenomenal scale.

A major task in rural development is to establish standards and sensitivity in the society, which helps to identify leadership potential in these terms. Experience indicates that such a cadre, which has to be both disciplined and innovative, can only be welded together by sharing a common value system and an appropriate philosophy.

In discussing the fate of the community development programme in India, we mentioned the default of the Congress to heed Gandhi's advice and to provide a committed cadre for rural transformation as one of the major causes for its failure to realize even its limited objectives. The regime was then forced to rely on the bureaucracy to implement the programme. As a recognition of the gulf between even the lowest bureaucrat and the people, a link in the form of a 'village-level worker' was created, whose specifications (leadership, humility, ability to work with the people, expertise, etc.) were indeed admirable, though far removed from reality. The village-level worker remained a petty bureaucrat, aloof from the people and accountable only to his hierarchical superiors.

The Chinese leadership, aware of the élitist traits of the bureaucracy, relied on party workers, often local young men and women, to reach the peasants and to lead them. Ideology provided the framework within which the cadres linked the needs and aspirations of the people to the broad directions of public policy. The cadres were accountable both to the leadership and to the masses. The Liu line departed from this concept by stressing technical competence and managerial ability more than integration with the masses; the Cultural Revolution has tried to reverse this line.

Taken as a group, the link-cadres perform a political function in the highest sense of the term. They are the nervous system of a mass democracy, conveying the ideas and consciousness of the masses to the leaders, who systematize them into a basis of action; carrying these back to the masses in an undistorted form; triggering appropriate responses in the far-flung collectives; carrying the subsequent diverse experiences back to the leadership; and thus integrating the society through a continuous two-way exchange involving reflection, action and conceptualization, permitting both autonomy and coordination.

9 The System at Work

> Much of China's overall performance can be explained 'simply' in terms of very high investment and savings ratios that were attained by 1953–54 and were more or less maintained thereafter ... To attain these the old class structures were overthrown by revolution. That is what lies behind 'simply'.[1]

Planning in the large

In the previous two chapters we have discussed the major tasks involved in the process of transforming society and the broad principles of building appropriate institutions in a mass democracy. These tasks aim at the creation, through a series of intermediate stages, of an appropriate economic structure and superstructure. In the early stages, the state of consciousness of the masses usually calls for measures like land reform in the countryside and concomitant measures elsewhere. Further steps of a higher order are undertaken in subsequent stages. At any given stage, involvement of the masses in concrete activities and interaction between the leadership and the masses raise their consciousness and prepare them for more advanced measures subsequently. The consciousness gap between the masses and the leaders and contradiction within the leadership also need to be narrowed.

The sequencing of these measures in various stages and the resolution of the intra-leadership conflicts are the essence of what may be called 'planning in the large'—essentially a political (ideological and mobilizational) task.

Planning in the small

While planning in the large mobilizes the people for fundamental social transformation and economic leaps, the detailed management of the economy for sustained rise in production and economic growth is no less important. This is the task of 'planning in the small', which receives particular attention in the interval between successive thrusts whilst the society is consolidating on the gains from the previous leap. The institutions which we have discussed in the previous chapter are the instruments for planning both in the large and in the small.

The precise institutional framework that will emerge at any given stage is a matter of evolution; it may, however, be instructive to discuss the process of planning in the small with reference to a hypothetical case. The situation we have in mind may be a medium-sized country at a stage in the transformation process at which the society has sufficiently absorbed the basic values and created the necessary institutional infrastructure to be able to afford to concentrate on the more technical task of systematic and coordinated economic planning.

The organization tree

In the Asian rural scene, the basic unit of community life is the village. Between this lowest entity and the highest, the state or nation, there are several intermediate administrative units—union, thana, subdivision, district, division and province in ascending order, with a higher echelon consisting of several immediately lower echelons. For example, in

South Asia a union consists of several villages, a thana is composed of several unions, and so on. The number of these intermediate units varies from country to country, depending on the geographical area, the size of population and the level of technology. For illustration, we will take a five-tier system: village—union—thana—district—centre, in ascending order. Each unit in the five-tier system has its own institutional arrangement. The functionaries are chosen democratically.

In this five-tier system there are two three-tier entities: (a) village—union—thana and (b) thana—district—nation; (a) is the pyramid of communal development in the countryside with thana as the apex; (b) is the formal governmental machinery linking the rural 'communes' and holding them together. We will now elaborate on the functional responsibilities of the communal entity, viz., village—union—thana (or commune).

The village

A major impediment to the modernization of agriculture is small-scale farming and petty commodity production in fragmented and scattered plots. Initial land reform aggravates this problem via the creation of still smaller-scale proprietors. These plots are much too small from considerations of economies of scale in production, marketing and deployment of technology. Major investments in irrigation, flood control, road building, land reclamation, afforestation, etc. are beyond the scope of small-scale farming. A consolidation of smallholdings, large enough to carry out these activities and to develop support industries mainly producing agricultural machinery, is called for. This is done in our three-tier scheme of village—union—thana. Formally, land is owned by the thana.

The village represents the basic agricultural unit for production, distribution, labour management and accounting. Although land is formally owned by the thana, from the point of view of management it effectively belongs, together with animals and implements, to the village. The team is responsible for production planning over the crop year and for a particular quota of sales at planned prices (to be discussed later) to the state procurement agency. The union may help the team in preparing the plan. Income is calculated at the village level after deduction of expenses on account of production and capital accumulation. A part of this income is contributed to the union for agricultural taxes, village welfare funds and the reserve fund. The rest of the cash and kind are distributed to the team members on the basis of family needs and differential labour contributions corresponding to the state of mass consciousness that has been attained. The contribution of the individual is measured in a mass meeting on the basis of his own appraisal and collective assessment.

In the same way, resource allocation decisions at the village level are also a fully collective affair. The setting up of objectives, the evaluation of projects, etc. are not done by agents or technical formulae external to the consciousness of the masses, which is sovereign; they are done instead at mass meetings, where mass consciousness unfolds through interaction and the masses progressively evolve and improve upon their own standards of evaluation through collective decision making, action and experience.

The union

The union's activities comprise those that are

beyond the scope of a single village: food processing, animal breeding, water conservancy, land reclamation and improvement, road building, transport (e.g. trucks), power supply, repair of agricultural machinery, primary education, health clinics, etc.

The union is responsible for year-round employment within its boundary. For example, it maintains teams for well sinking, electrical work, etc. Such teams consist mainly of workers who temporarily may not be needed in their regular jobs. The union also undertakes trade and commerce activities, such as running shops for consumer goods and agricultural inputs, repair of hardware, bicycles, etc.

The union also plays a coordinating role for the member villages. It allocates pieces of machinery to village production teams and repairs and maintains them. The purchase of new machinery by a village is done in consultation with the union so as to harmonize the competing needs of different villages with the available supply. The union's funds, as well as the reserve funds maintained by the villages with the union, may be used for purchasing machinery and other productive assets, not necessarily on the basis of a village's own contribution and population but on equity considerations.

The union pays its employees wages which are within the same range as the remuneration of village production team members. The surplus left over after deduction of costs from revenue is the source of the union's capital accumulation and its reserve.

The thana

At this stage of development, the thana is the highest expression of the collective personality. It integrates the community. In it is manifested the living and concrete identification of the people with the collective through which they get a sense of belonging and security, while for larger collectives—the district and the nation—the identification is more spontaneous and abstract. The thana is also the basic unit of self-reliance, maximum technological and distributional interdependence and detailed planning.

The thana is responsible for production planning of the unions on the basis of field plans coming from the village teams. It mobilizes manpower for inter-union work and also for any district project it may be called upon to participate in at the thana level. It runs factories to support agriculture, constructs public works, maintains middle schools and hospitals and plans major investments and capital construction projects. It buys tractors and other major agricultural machinery from the district and state factories: a substantial part of its income comes from these agricultural machinery stations. The thana factories also repair and manufacture some agricultural implements. Veteran workers make innovations sometimes with the assistance of state factories. A major supply of socially motivated technical workers come from its middle schools.

The thana is a self-reliant region aiming at provision of the articles of consumption that the masses need in order to have an adequate standard of living. The thanas together also have to meet the food and raw material requirements at the district and state level. To do this job, agricultural mechanization is its fundamental economic task. It also provides defence for its inhabitants and fights natural calamities.

Through all these activities, the thana is the focal point of communal life.

The planning ladder: bottom-up, top-down

While the thana is the basic cell of national life, communities are not isolated human groups. Their economic activities are linked together by national economic planning.

The national plan is the result of interactions between the higher and lower tiers, both at the pre-planning stage and at the stage of systematic plan preparation. At the pre-planning stage, agencies responsible for planning at various levels initiate, collect, examine and disseminate ideas and exercises on plan perspective, goals, strategies and concrete possibilities. From their own experiences, the lower levels know what is feasible on the ground; their ideas and aspirations are also the more important since it is *their* initiatives which have to be released. The higher levels have a broader view of issues and grasp the national and regional dimensions thereof; they also see local innovations and achievements in the light of broader perspectives and transmit their significance throughout the nation.

These pre-plan ideas and exercises are absorbed in the systematic planning work that follows.

At the lowest level, the village prepares a production plan on the basis of its resource position and past experience. All the village plans are assembled at the union level. The union then makes its own plan, integrating its own proposed activities with the village plans. The union plans go to the thana. The thana in turn integrates the union plans with its own proposed activities. And the thana plan is drafted and sent to the district. In the same way, the district plan is drafted and sent to the centre. The centre assembles all the 'district' plans and the proposals made by various ministries for the central sector.

Naturally, the plan drafts thus assembled are not necessarily consistent. The centre strings these drafts and proposals together after the necessary consistency checks and adjustments. The national plan draft thus emerges.

The lower-level plan targets which were originally sent to the higher levels may not match the ones stemming from the central draft plan. Further discussion and deliberation at the lower levels may be needed for revised estimates to be prepared and transmitted upwards. The flow from below to the top then takes place again and a second round of coordination at the centre is undertaken. Several such iterations may be necessary before the final plan is made. Fortunately, due to the principle of self-reliance, the thanas are connected through relatively weak economic linkages. This helps to reduce the number of iterations.

National planning, even under the full participation of the masses, can hardly be perfect. The complex balancing and allocating task that planning implies can be done only approximately. Unforeseen favourable conditions, such as the discovery of a new method or a new resource or an inspiring new example of mass mobilization, may take place during the plan period. Unintended information gaps might also slip in. All such events may call for mid-course revisions of the planned activities at appropriate levels.

10 'Action Research': Probing Mass Consciousness

Social transformation, as we have outlined, is a process of interaction between committed voluntary human action and objective forces of history. The latter consist of the state of transformation of nature (e.g. physical capital), the state of arts (e.g. science, technology and social culture) and the state of mass consciousness. These are not only accumulated stocks, but also flows which interact mutually. Together they circumscribe the range of feasible choices for voluntary action. Those who wish to steer social change need to grasp historical forces thus acting on the society, and above all must assess the state of mass consciousness, which is the fundamental driving force of history.

This requires investigations which are sensitive not only to the static but also to the dynamic characters of mass consciousness. The latter have two facets: the spontaneous currents as emerging from history and their interactions; and the responsiveness of these currents, in their complex interactions, to change-stimuli, and the new patterns that tend thereby to emerge.

Conventional social research has been preoccupied with the study of static aspects of mass consciousness and of its spontaneous currents. Such 'observational' research is valuable, but is an incomplete guide to social action unaided by knowledge of responsiveness to change-stimuli. This knowledge can be gained only through concrete involvement in social processes and through the generation of new processes of mass action and interaction (e.g. mutual aid and cooperation, collective administration of scarce agricultural inputs, collective management of property, land consolidation, irrigation works by contributory labour, mobilizing local youth for literacy drives). Initiating, steering and scientifically studying such processes are important tasks for leaders as well as for others actively wishing to contribute to the accumulation of experience and knowledge relevant for transforming society.

Such 'action research', revealing as it does the potentials of the society, the 'proto-history' as it were which is a part of history itself, is invaluable for developing a line of action for transforming society that is neither ahead of mass consciousness and hence alienating, nor behind and hence needlessly conservative. In the process, this will also strengthen the bond between the leaders and the masses, generate cadres that will be required at the very inception of mass democracy, develop experience in social administration, help to raise the consciousness of the masses involved, and serve also to mobilize them for the larger political task.

Such probing, whose value is independent of the stage of history, should be a continuous task. While a mass democracy makes possible the widest application of such action, the latter is no less important in the historical stage preceding the formal ascendance of mass power. The greater the accumulation during this stage of experience, knowledge, values and human bonds that such investigations provide, the richer in constructive possibilities the society will be when the new order emerges.

It is in this light that the recent, more progressive initiatives, like some of the efforts described in chapters 2 and 3, may be viewed, and attempts to seek 'area' and 'activity' bases in order to promote such initiatives further encouraged.

Notes

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Micro-level Development:
Design and Evaluation of Rural Development Projects

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Strategies of micro-level development, and more specifically the design and evaluation of rural development projects, have been the subject of active debate for the last few years. The UN Asian Development Institute convened an expert group meeting in 1974 which helped to sharpen the issues between those who felt that the existing methodologies could be expanded to include the particularistic features of rural development and others who felt that a fundamentally different framework was needed, beginning with the definition and objectives of development itself, in view of the accumulating positive and negative experience of the post-war decades. (An Approach to Evolving Guidelines for Rural Development, *1975*).

Following this meeting, the four authors undertook the preceding broad analysis of the Asian development experience and indicated the direction in which a theory of rural development may be sought. Derived from actual experience of several Asian countries, the broad construct attempts to explore the long-term direction and goals of development effort.

In this work, the authors revert to the study of the basic unit—the village—to gain insights in evolving principles of project design and evaluation in consonance with the concepts developed in the previous work. The specifics of the various village situations are then generalized by way of principles susceptible to further testing under more diverse conditions.

Introduction

The Approach

In our previous study on rural development, the concept of development has been presented in terms of a purposeful growth of human personality through the release and application of man's creative energies within a collective framework.

We have also taken the world view that society is not a homogeneous entity, and that social relations are characterized by contradictions. This world view is based on scientific knowledge already existing. It has been reinforced by our direct interactions with the societies on the Indian subcontinent.

With this perception, we see the task of designing and evaluating a rural development project as one of understanding (a) the contradictions of reality in the concrete and (b) how a process of development as we have conceived it may be set in motion at the village level under such conditions.

The question cannot be abstracted from its national and international dimensions, on which our perceptions are also to be found in the previous study. In the present work, however, we are concerned with the design and evaluation of rural development projects in the context of the contradictions in the mode of production, which at any given time may or may not be directly related to the dominant contradiction at the national level (e.g. external aggression). In this sense our study is not comprehensive. It should also be emphasized that our proposals are to be considered only in the context of the dominant national contradiction at the stage when action is being contemplated.

In studying the contradictions in the mode of production, the method of scientific enquiry has been followed, i.e. taking conceptions to the field for concrete investigation of reality followed by reflection and analysis to form systematic understanding of what is observed. For this, three locations—one in India, one in Bangladesh and one in Thailand—were selected.

The field investigation in each case included the study of objective data, dialogues with the rural masses, and interactions with people involved in action research where relevant, including the target groups of such interventions. After the initial round of investigation and reflection, the emerging propositions on the evaluation criteria were tested out in a South Korean village participating in the Saemaul Movement.

On the basis of the above, considerations in designing rural development projects specific to the respective concrete situations studied as well as certain generalized hypotheses and proposals for rural project design have been presented.

Criteria for evaluation of rural development projects have also been proposed. These proposals are followed by a discussion of the method of evaluation to be used and of the the role that evaluation of such projects can play in the development process.

It is hoped that the hypotheses and proposals can be tested through action research in the field, which may then form the basis of more advanced knowledge of rural reality and understanding of the processes and possibilities of rural development.

The approach to project design and evaluation taken in this study may be contrasted with that of standard approaches in this area. Firstly, the world view taken in these approaches is one of a conflict-free society, a view which is contrary to reality. Secondly, these approaches are preoccupied with economic costs and benefits, whereas economic and non-economic considerations in development are in fact inseparable, and the task of designing rural projects may be seen as initiating a process

whereby development takes place in both economic and non-economic terms together and in a mutually reinforcing framework. Finally, the methodology of arriving at proposals in conventional approaches has ignored the necessary interaction between theory and practice, and is therefore predominantly speculative.

Part One

Three Field Investigations

1 The Village of Sultanpur—India

The setting

One hundred miles east of Delhi in the Moradabad district of the state of Uttar Pradesh, just a mile off the main highway to Nainital, is the village of Sultanpur.* Close to the junction of the highway with the metalled road leading to Sultanpur is the rapidly growing market centre of Maya, which serves the surrounding 15 to 20 villages, located within a radius of three miles and with a total population of 20,000.

Sultanpur has a population of about 2,500, somewhat larger than that of neighbouring villages. It also has a more heterogeneous socio-economic composition: Hindus and Muslims, a wide range of castes, extremes of riches and poverty. While it is perhaps not a 'typical' or an 'average' village, it represents a microcosm of the broad situation in western Uttar Pradesh, an area with a population of over 40 million. Also, in a dynamic sense Sultanpur is average—slower moving than the areas closer to Delhi and Punjab, but ahead of areas to the east or in the interior.

Residents of Sultanpur own about 2,000 acres of land, some situated within the village boundaries and some located in the four surrounding villages. All the land owned outside the village belongs to the Jats, the rich and dominant caste, as a legacy of the old Zamindari (feudal landlord) system. In fact, over 70 per cent of the 2,000 acres belongs to the Jats, who constitute 15 per cent of the population. They also own 11 of the 12 tractors, all the privately owned electric tube-wells and 27 of the 46 diesel engine sets. While the purchase of some of these assets has been financed by commercial banks, the Jats also have large deposits with banks in Maya, one reputed to be as high as one million rupees. Several large, newly built houses in the Jat area, two and three storeys high and crowned by television aerials, are a testimony to the increasing prosperity of the community, though some persons are far richer than others, even within the same family.

There are, of course, some disadvantages: the wealthiest man in the village was murdered a year ago and the Jats have little faith in the ability of the police to protect them from others—and from each other. While law is ineffective or inoperative Jat guns maintain order, such as it is, and consequently the favourable status quo.

Counterposed to the Jats is the numerically dominant (40 per cent of the population) 'untouchable' community of Jatavs (Chamars), who, except for the small sweeper caste, constitute the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. Most of them are landless labourers working on Jat-owned lands, and even those who own small parcels of land (½ to 1 acre, unirrigated) derive a substantial part of their income as agricultural labourers. However, work is available for barely 150 days in a year and this causes severe competition among the Jatavs, a situation which benefits the Jats. Promises of steady employment, coupled with a small advance, seem to offer material and phychological security to the Jatavs, while providing the Jats with semi-bonded labour and additional income through usury (5 per cent per month interest).

Ranked even higher socially than the Jats are the Brahmins (15 families) and the Banias (6 families). Both have lost their former importance in the village. The Brahmins own small amounts of land and the Banias own the small decaying shops. However, the Brahmins are using their traditional advantage in education to move their children to urban jobs (school teachers, government clerks) and the Banias

*Though the situation described in this study is real, the names of the villages have been altered.

are setting up shops and other trading activities (including food grains) in Maya. In sum, both the communities are likely to maintain their relative advantage in the hierarchy through the new urban linkages.

Between the Jats and the Jatavs are a large number of middle castes. Some, like the Mali (gardener), were traditionally farmers and others—goldsmith, blacksmith, carpenter, barber, potter, washerman, etc.—were artisans or service professionals. With the breakdown of the self-sufficient, non-economic, village system which used to support these castes with a predetermined share of the village produce in return for their services, and the rise of the markets outside the village which provide a wider range of goods, the traditional tasks of these castes have been decaying. As a result, some of them have moved to nearby markets to ply their crafts, but the majority have taken to agriculture, either as small landowners or as landless labourers, increasing the pressure on already scarce employment opportunities.

The Malis, who are universally recognized as the best farmers in the village (even by the Jats), have prospered however. On smallholdings, mainly using family labour, they have taken to very intensive agriculture, including high-yielding varieties of cereals, sugarcane and vegetables. Their savings have been sufficient even on two to three acres of land to dig a tube-well and install an oil engine. Being self-sufficient in labour, free from debt and oriented towards extra-village markets, the 30 Mali families maintain a somewhat detached attitude towards the affairs of the village.

The rest of the communities are numerically small. They are dependent on the Jats for their livelihood and are also, perhaps, physically afraid of them. This dependence-cum-fear, coupled with a feeling of caste superiority, creates a barrier between them and the Jatavs, although in economic status they are much closer to the latter. In fact, the middle castes are socially the most conservative, more so than the Jats, who originally migrated from Punjab where caste and untouchability taboos are far weaker than in Uttar Pradesh. It is only the Jatavs who are relatively free of the deep-seated conditioning in favour of status quo subtly embedded in the religio-cultural traditions, and even they don't always question the philosophical roots, but mainly the practical consequences.

The Muslim community (10 per cent), while functionally integrated in the village, maintains a distinctive identity, though perhaps as one more, rather special, 'caste'. The traditional occupation has been oil pressing, but most are now small to medium farmers. Due to the lack of Hindu taboos, they show a greater affinity with the Jatavs than is felt by the other Hindu castes.

Each caste in the village lives in its own compact area, with interdining and intermarriage prohibited even among castes of equal rank. Common educational facilities are gradually undermining these traditions among the young, at least in terms of reduction in psychological distance, if not in actual actions within the village. Outside the village, however, the young are giving up these taboos, except for intermarriage.

Educational facilities have greatly expanded in the last 25 years, though their use, particularly by the poorer communities and the women, is still far from universal. The village itself has a primary and a secondary school, and a mile away on the highway is a junior college. A girls school has recently been built in the village, but has not yet started operating due to petty disputes. Education has given an opportunity to some in every community (Jatavs, as a backward caste, pay no fees for

schooling) to acquire job-seeking qualifications, and is seen even by the poor as an avenue of 'escape' from the village by at least some of their children. There is little thought of the relevance of the education for village life itself, and in fact it is considered wasteful to stay in the village and engage in agriculture after being educated. Nevertheless, with a growing number of educated unemployed produced in the urban areas themselves, the newly educated village youth, particularly those who come from the poorer classes and who have no outside contacts, are finding it very difficult to obtain jobs and the result is a substantial reservoir of educated, unemployed, poor youth in the village. Alienated from their fathers' professions and incapable of being absorbed in the larger economy, they are a source of frustration and discontent in the present system.

Strangely enough, the Jats have not monopolized education as they have other spheres. This is partly because of their traditional contempt for education as a luxury unbecoming men of action and partly because of ample economic opportunities on their own large farms. This attitude is a reflection of an essentially feudal mental outlook. Belatedly, though, there is some recognition that this neglect is not only costing them possible alternative avenues of employment and prestige, but is also putting them at a strategic disadvantage in dealing with the better educated and 'cunning' Banias (traders), who exploit them from Maya through subtle means. There is a grudging admission that 'brain' is gaining increasing superiority over 'brawn'.

However, in spite of these recently created educational facilities the bulk of the population over 30, and the mass of females of all ages, are illiterate. Sporadic efforts at adult education have been fruitless.

Women of higher and middle castes do not engage in outside work. Only the Jatav women do field work. Most women do look after the buffaloes though, whose milk is mainly for home consumption. Women of the poor castes, even illiterates, seem also to exercise considerable influence within the family on domestic and even livelihood matters, and the older women particularly show little inhibition in public discussions.

Historical roots of the present political-economic situation

Sultanpur is a very old village, and even the Jats who migrated from Punjab came several centuries ago. For some generations now it seems that even the marriage connections of the Jats with Punjab have been replaced by marriages with Jats within the area, but always outside the village. These inter-village marriage linkages provide the kinship basis of the solidarity of the Jats of the region vis-à-vis the other communities.

The Jats were the Zamindars of the village and until 50 years ago controlled all the land. They did not, however, engage in agriculture and subsisted on rent collection from the actual cultivators. In fact, in the true feudal tradition they did nothing. The Banias served as their financial managers, gave or lent the Jats whatever money they required and collected the rents from the cultivators. The Jats were largely unaware of the exact state of their finances and were perpetually in debt to the Banias, who were the richest and most powerful caste.

Even before independence in 1947, some of the castes (e.g. the Malis) were gradually purchasing small parcels of land from the Jats, who were always in need of more money.

The abolition of Zamindari in the late 'forties deprived the Jats of their main source of income, as most of their personal land was mortgaged to the Banias. But the debt redemption and 'land to the tiller' laws of 1950 suddenly freed the Jats from Bania economic domination. They resumed possession of their land and many of them started on the long road from feudal overlordship to capitalist farming. For the first time they participated actively in agriculture, at least to the extent of supervision and tractor driving, a technologically advanced activity not considered demeaning like working behind a bullock-drawn plough. Laws enacting ceilings on land holding had little effect, and by legal subdivisions, collusion and sheer force the Jats managed as a community to lose none of their land, except by steady sales to others at ever increasing prices. In fact, introduction of irrigation greatly increased their effective holdings, and control over fertilizers, better seeds, tractors and credit further multiplied their productive assets. Almost 70 per cent of Jat land is now irrigated, which allows multiple cropping and a shift to high-value crops such as sugarcane. The major crop is still wheat and the availability of high-yielding varieties, coupled with fertilizers, has totally changed the economics of agriculture. The demonstration effect of neighbouring areas of Punjab and favourable land relations have facilitated the process of technological change in Sultanpur and the surrounding region. The greatly increased labour requirement of the new agriculture has been more than matched by the explosive increase in population, particularly labour population, of the village. Wages are still between three and four rupees a day, 40 to 50 per cent lower than in Punjab.

Though perhaps not as resourceful, hard-working and open to new ideas as their brothers in Punjab (small farmers in the village consider Jats 'lazy, wasteful and inefficient'), most Jats have nevertheless made a remarkable transition to modern farming and their productivity is steadily rising. Their assets and economic power have increased greatly, and they have fully replaced the Banias even in the moneylending sphere.

However, while the Jats are acquiring capitalist economic power, they still cling to a feudal mentality and world outlook. For two decades following independence, as a class, Jats and their allies held undisputed political power at local and state levels and were an important factor in the national political coalition. With the gradual shift in the national political scene, the Jats and other feudal and semi-feudal classes have increasingly lost strength. Politically their sympathies are now with a regional conservative party which has at times successfully challenged the Congress (ruling national party) power in the state, although they are prudent enough to supply candidates to the Congress party also. In spite of the obvious and immense improvement in their fortunes in the last 25 years, the Jats show an acute irritation with the government and the urbanites. They feel that while the urban rich are not denied ostentatious living, the rural rich are being made scapegoats in all public pronouncements denouncing socio-economic inequalities. Laws (land ceiling, debt redemption) are also directed against them and they feel sandwiched between pressures from the top and the bottom. There is a discrepancy, a contradiction, between Jat socio-economic power and aspirations and their actual share in political leadership. The conflicting interests of the urban and rural élites are sharpening, and in this state of flux new alliances, as yet unstable, are being forged between the newly emerging urban power groups and the more dynamic rural classes. Though their political

rhetoric need not be taken seriously, their anti-feudal values and a positive attitude towards production are more verifiable.

While the historical changes in the condition of the Jats, starting in the feudal past and resulting in today's affluent state, are reasonably simple to follow, the story of the Jatavs is more complex. On the one hand is their present tenuous existence, which may best be described as 'no one is starving now'. Added to that is a clear recognition of the injustices of the system which they feel utterly powerless to correct, and which they accept as the shape of the future in which they will 'continue to survive from day to day'. In sharp contrast to the experience of a stark present and the acceptance of a bleak future is the universal feeling of emancipation from the indignities of the feudal past. Vivid stories are recalled by the elders of the era when the Zamindars held them in total bondage, extracted labour at will (with or without payment), meted out corporal punishment and generally ruled by brute force. 'Congress changed all that' is the perception which implies that neither they nor the Jats had any significant role in bringing about the transformation, and indirectly shapes the attitude of passivity towards the future, which also can only be changed by the intervention of external forces.

The major objective change for the Jatavs is the removal of the fear of physical violation for minor transgressions. In this sphere they have realized, perhaps unconsciously, their collective numerical strength and feel confident and even aggressively defiant vis-à-vis the Jats. Powerless to counter this defiance without resorting to attention-attracting application of force, the Jats have gradually adjusted to the change in situation—without, however, losing their grip over economic and local political power.

The Jatavs feel today that they are 'free to work whenever and for whoever they please'. In a labour surplus situation, however, this is partially an illusion, as working for A or B or C at the same wage rate is no real choice in a situation like that in Sultanpur, unless collectively used as a weapon to chastise a particular landlord. The only real 'freedom' which is available is withholding labour, which, with many bordering on starvation, is not a practical choice even for a brief period. While the Jatavs are united for physical protection, they are in competition with each other for work and, as previously mentioned, their need to borrow money for consumption and ceremonials, combined with the Jats' willingness to lend money to foster attachment, creates a situation of semi-bondage which both sides seem to prefer to the uncertainties of a free labour market but of course for opposite reasons. It is significant that the move from indignity to injustice is subjectively perceived, at least by the older generation, as progress. Perhaps in this transitional stage between dependence and independence there is as yet no collective consciousness that while the Jatavs are dependent on the Jats for livelihood, the Jats are also dependent on them for labour, in a situation akin to capitalist industrial organization.

Due to increased production and greater labour requirements living conditions have improved for most Jatavs, in spite of the increased population. Food intake is more regular, clothing is better, mud houses are being slowly replaced by brick, small parcels of land have been acquired by some and education is within reach of many. The 'trickle down' is taking place in some form, though disparities have greatly increased, not only between the Jats and the Jatavs but among the Jatavs themselves. A few—very few—families have ac-

quired considerable amounts of land and the richest Jatav has even set up a flourishing cloth shop in Maya. His new two-storey house has been symbolically separated from the Jatav area with a gate across the public road. His nephew, in partnership with a Jat schoolfriend, is now setting up a distilled-water factory in Maya with a 150,000 rupee loan from the State Finance Corporation. As a small price for these achievements, or perhaps as a symbol of success, the family has acquired a gun, which places them more in the company of Jats than of fellow Jatavs. The system seems flexible enough to permit the 're-classing' and co-optation of the enterprising few, regardless of class/caste origin, and successfully converts potential enemies into allies in maintaining the status quo. It is significant that these opportunities are being created in trade and industry, which are new activities, rather than in land-based occupations, which would be more disruptive of the local status quo. In a sense, a new dynamic class is being created in the village with the active support of the urban power structure, which is bypassing Jat local control. The new rural entrepreneur class cuts across caste lines and in time may be a challenge to Jat power, more perhaps with economic strength and external linkages than with guns. For the mass of the population, however, the change would bring no relief from oppression and exploitation.

The Jatavs support the Congress Party in state and national elections because it has an image of being more radical and therefore closer to their interests. In the absence of any other effective leftist organization in the area, there is also no alternative for the Jatavs. There is generally considerable faith in the intentions of the national leaders, and all the gaps between promise and performance are attributed to the corrupt and inefficient administrative machinery which is seen as the tool of local Jat power. Recent (1975) measures regarding redemption of debts and distribution of land are known to all, but are seen as difficult to implement. The former is ineffective because of (a) fear of the Jats and (b) lack of an alternative source of ready credit. The feeling about land distribution is that only marginal village common land is being distributed and that too, on the basis of bribes, more to the landed than to the landless. The village is excited by the information recently leaked by the village accountant (a Muslim) that 150 acres of Jat-owned land is about the be declared surplus and will be distributed to the landless. One hundred and fifty acres, though not very large and hardly enough to solve the total problem, is nonetheless 7½ per cent of total land holding, many times more than the marginal redistribution effected in the last 30 years. If the rumour becomes a reality it will further increase the credibility of the Congress Party with the poor.

The importance of capturing local political power through collective numerical strength has not been lost on the Jatavs of the area. In fact in many villages they succeeded in electing a village headman, only to be subverted by the economic power and non-cooperation of the Jats, which paralysed the village administration and brought the Jats back to power in the subsequent election. The experience shows that formal village structures are themselves powerless, and are effective only to the extent that the larger political structure wants them to be. If Jats are in power the external linkages operate; if Jatavs 'capture' positions the external patronage is shut off.

In Sultanpur the last election for headman was a significant event, as for the first time the contest was between a Jat and a Muslim supported by the Jatavs. In spite of the over-

whelming numerical majority of the non-Jats, the Jat candidate won by 124 votes. The election is still the subject of intense debate in the village, with analysis mingled with recriminations. The Jats are supposed to have used bribes, threats, the Hindu-Muslim issue and even vote falsifications to win the election. It is claimed that the majority of Jatavs did not succumb to these devices, but the middle castes went along with the Jats for various reasons. While temporarily the election seems to have exposed and increased the divisions among the non-Jat communities, the eventual effect of the open discussions might be just the opposite. The Jats also seem prepared to accept and adjust to this local, limited political change and mainly defend their economic position with the help of their physical power and external linkages.

In sum, the developments of the last few decades, mainly quantitative in nature, have sharpened the contradictions within the village: whereas the changes have had a socially liberating effect on the Jatavs, the system has continued to be economically repressive, the net effect on mass consciousness having remained as yet unresolved. True, a new entrepreneurial class is emerging which includes a few Jatavs. It may even be able to manipulate Jatav numerical strength for its own political ends far better than the Jats, and perhaps in return be prepared to dole out some economic benefits and even make some symbolic political gestures. It could have little interest, however, in ending exploitation and in raising the consciousness of the masses. Nevertheless, the struggle for power between the Jats, the economically stronger but politically weakening feudal class, and the new capitalist class with external political linkages does create a situation in which the poor classes could gather independent strength, if an understanding of their common interest can transcend internal conflicts.

Probing mass consciousness

Most of the facts, feelings, events and situations described in the previous sections were gradually discovered through long dialogues with various individuals and groups in the village extended over a number of days. Some of the group meetings, all informal, were necessarily separate, e.g. Jats and Jatavs, but many had participants from various non-Jat communities. Most of the meetings took place in the Jatav area. There were occasions for separate meetings with the young, though not with women, as there is at the moment a strong backlash against the family planning programme and a separate discussion with women is viewed with suspicion.

The narration of history and the description of the present, though unstructured, provided an occasion through concrete situations to gauge the level of mass consciousness; discussion of specific future possibilities (e.g. collective decision on the mode of utilization of 150 acres of 'surplus' land) spearheaded deeper probing, exposing a series of subjective contradictions, which are no less real than the obvious objective contradictions such as class, caste, etc. It is quite likely that the next step, i.e. actual action, will reveal more contradictions. But even the initial step, if it is to have a reasonable chance of success and lead to further steps, must reckon with the existing realities, objective and subjective. The design of a programme must be circumscribed by these parameters, though it must not accept these limitations as permanent barriers, and in fact the programme should try to activate a process which in stages would confront and resolve the contradictions.

Understanding of the main problem

The people (non-Jats) have an understanding of the working of the economic system and can describe in detail the processes (wage exploitation, moneylending, bribery, price discrimination, e.g. in milk) through which exploitation takes place. They also understand that low wages, due to oversupply of labour, are the principal mode of exploitation. The role of moneylending in creating bondage is not very clearly perceived, though the usurious nature is understood and deeply resented.

It is felt that those who have some land are in a slightly better bargaining position; they work as labourers only during peak periods and therefore get a higher average wage for the days that they work outside their farms. Diffident of the practicality of collective wage negotiation and aware of the advantages of having some land, the unanimous demand of the landless is to be given two to three acres of land each, on which they can apply their labour. The desire is to become self-sufficient farmers and essentially to de-link themselves (like the Malis) from the Jat-controlled economic system. The fact that distribution of even one acre of land per family would require land reforms and removal of some lands from the Jats is not squarely faced, as the problem then becomes too complex for solution, and it is more comfortable to push the perception of the real contradiction into the background. Instead, attention is concentrated on the secondary issue of the mode of distribution of the small extent of village common land, mostly marginal, and the bribery and injustice connected with it. There is an unwillingness to accept the fact that even if all village common land was distributed to the landless it would solve the problem of hardly 15 to 20 families, as the hope seems to be that each family has a chance of being among the fortunate few. That there should be a solution to benefit *all* seems too remote and unrealistic to be worth a positive effort, within a mental framework which basically sees little hope in the future.

The hunger for land is intense and is based largely on rational considerations rather than those of prestige and status. The hope of even a partial fulfilment of this urge, if properly harnessed, could form the basis of significant mobilization.

The obsession with land obscures consideration of other income-generating activities largely independent of land, e.g. buffaloes for milk, not to mention poultry and pigs, which conflict with religious taboos. With some discussion, however, these are not ruled out as possibilities, though past experience with individual marketing (a private dairy which took the milk closed down and defaulted on payment) is a source of discouragement.

Religious and caste conflicts

As was demonstrated by the last election for village headman, the Hindu-Muslim feeling can be excited and exploited. Most lower castes (particularly the Jatavs) do not, however, have any deep-seated antagonism which would prevent them from uniting with the Muslims on issues which affect them jointly. The same is true among the Muslims.

Among the non-Jat Hindu castes, due to history, customs, separation in living space, etc., the interaction has been limited. There has been little dialogue and no perception of common interest. The degree of collective feeling diminishes from nuclear family to extended family to caste and stops there. The nature of the economic arrangements has also linked each of the castes individually to the

Jats, as principal buyers of goods and services, and not to each other. Discussions revealed ignorance and some mutual distrust, but little antagonism. A little deeper probing quickly brings to the surface recognition of common interest and causes, at least at the conceptual level. Strangely enough, though Jatavs are the poorest caste, they are somewhat envied and admired, as because of their numerical strength they are able to stand up boldly to the Jats. The extension of this physical protection alone could become a strong magnet for unifying the various communities, if accompanied by other positive programmes of a social and economic nature.

As mentioned previously, the young of different communities, who have been brought into intimate contact through the educational system, have the least feeling of separateness and could form the initial basis of the movement to bring the castes closer together. The attitudes of the young also indicate that the problem is likely to become progressively less serious over time.

Attitudes towards cooperative work and collective solutions

The need for unity is clearly recognized in some spheres (e.g. local political power) and logically acknowledged for some others (e.g. collective ownership of an oil engine by a group of small landholders). Beyond that, individual interests, past experience and fears (of the Jats, officials, each other) all combine to prevent united action.

The middle farmers cannot visualize commensurate benefits by joining the poorer sections, while they do see possible risks of being submerged by the poor, who are a majority. Moreover, reasonably self-sufficient as they are, their limited needs for inputs etc. are at least partially met by Jat-controlled cooperative organizations. The non-agricultural castes, e.g. potters, are also too dependent on the Jats to unite easily with the Jatavs without demonstrated protection and advantages.

Among the Jatavs themselves, because of the nature of the economic system, the history has been one of competition rather than cooperation, except at times within the extended family (father and sons, brothers and nephews, perhaps cousins). Prolonged dialogue on the possibilities of forming small groups around items suggested by the people themselves (common oil engine, mutual obligation in buying buffaloes, joint ownership of goats) evoked a weak and hesitant response, although a few groups did take shape—but with an instinctive desire to have each one headed by a 'respected', i.e. rich, Jatav. The common refrain was that 'nowadays son does not listen to father and brother has disputes with brother'. These experiences of personal life are projected on a wider social plane and have become the basis of a pragmatic philosophy of the preferability of individualistic activity.*

The proposal of one Jatav to set up the first Jatav-owned shop was backed up by all on the basis that they would prefer to patronize a shop of their own. In this case they did not mind confronting the establishment and collectively petitioning the district authorities (300 signatures were anticipated) to get their mis-

*The only groupings that do form are between closely related family members of almost equal economic status. Even an attempt to form a group to buy buffaloes amongst closely related young men failed because four prospective members had half an acre of land and six had none. Another group formed by six brothers living in miniscule separate houses in a compact rectangle could not decide on how to house the animals. It appeared that a single stable containing the six buffaloes would lead to conflict between their wives.

managed (and black-marketed) sugar quotas transferred to the proposed new shop. Some defiance of the system seemed permissible to the Jatavs if it was a one-time act, not likely to provoke drastic retaliation and not demanding continuous cooperation and mutual dialogue. Without a conscious effort to the contrary, the system is more likely to throw up a small new class of entrepreneurs to confront the Jats than a cooperative movement based on mass participation.

The most dramatic illustration of mutual distrust was the discussion on possible methods for the disposal of the 150 acres of land which may be declared 'surplus' and transferred to the poor. The dialogue was centred around the possibility of the potential beneficiaries themselves deciding through collective deliberation the future of the surplus land and, secondarily, the possibility of utilizing the 150 acres as (a) one collective farm, (b) several small cooperatives which would be owned by different small groups, or (c) individually owned plots.

Amazingly enough, in spite of bitter experience with the injustices perpetrated by corrupt officials, it was felt that the decisions should be made by 'neutral' outsiders, as they themselves could never agree collectively.* Whether further dialogue and experience change this view or not, the initial reaction is very significant. It is a symptom that even the Jatavs have not totally escaped the influence of a philosophy that is simultaneously individualistic and self-negating.

Following quite logically from this first decision, any collective effort, even in small groups, was completely ruled out as impractical and conflict-producing. Incapacity to organize and inability to make large production decisions were given as two reasons, but the main reason put forward was the impossibility of agreeing on the distribution principle, to say nothing of the difficulty of implementing it. 'Those who work less may be bullies' was the fear, which grows naturally out of the examples of the more enterprising (e.g. the Jatav with the distilled-water plant) having been devoted to self-interest ('each is thinking for himself') and capable of exploiting the others. Jatavs admire and fear the more 'enterprising' amongst them, but do not trust them. Alternative styles of leadership are as yet unknown to them.

There was, however, willingness to have the land distributed individually in such a manner that voluntary groups formed for irrigation purposes would make up compact blocks. The issue of what constituted 'equitable' distribution of land in a group consisting of landless and a variety of land-poor was too complex to be tackled even hypothetically.

Awareness of issues and problems and a cognitive perception of the solutions are not lacking in Sultanpur. The objective barriers are formidable, but not insuperable if scaled in stages. The major hurdles are subjective—though they originate because of past and present objective conditions. Any programme which ignores their existence, as many of the past efforts (e.g. community development, the Green Revolution) have ignored objective factors (unequal social relations) will fail to achieve its aims.

* Recent experience suggests that the desire to tackle difficult disputes with the help of trusted outsiders can be utilized positively by development cadres to gain acceptability in the initial stages. Chary as they are of officials, the people quickly respond to a non-bureaucratic, non-élitist approach and resolve disputes by collective deliberation in the presence of the cadres. This suggests that the disunity is not as intractable as it appears and, further, provides a clue to the potentially vital role for the cadres.

Evaluation of the development process and assessment of the current situation

Thirty years of development programmes have produced substantial visible changes in Sultanpur: communication with the outside world, and consequently interaction with it, have increased greatly; agricultural production and productivity have improved due to irrigation, mechanization, use of high-yielding varieties, fertilizers, pesticides and the spread of high-value commercial crops; employment potential has increased and so have wages; starvation is rare and living conditions, including housing, show improvement; education has spread and is opening up avenues for extra-village employment for some of the young.

These are positive gains which Sultanpur shares with the surrounding region. But the changes have entailed a price, in terms of both negative things which have happened and of positive things which have not.

The economic power of the Jats has greatly increased and has been translated into *de jure* local political power through institutions like cooperatives and panchayats. A greater share of assets has now been concentrated in their hands, leading to increased exploitation of the poor through the mechanism of low wages and moneylending and creating the complete dependence of the poor on the Jats for survival. Even true capitalist development, with its limited liberating effect, is being thwarted, though of late the struggle between the emerging capitalist class and the more feudal Jats has been intensified.

Under these circumstances, the working of the democratic process and even of a just law and order is difficult. Manipulation of the dependents accentuates political and caste factionalism and systematically discourages—even suppresses—possibilites of united collective action, which is perceived as a threat to the status quo even by those factions of the élite who want some change in their favour.

In spite of the spread of formal education, superstitions and taboos persist, a rational approach is rare and curiosity and innovation are absent. The working of the change process has failed to create values and attitudes necessary for social progress. On the contrary, it has created strong vested-interest classes, some still feudal in outlook, which need and are able to resist social change that would threaten their commanding positions.

The dialogue with the Jatavs and other communities indicates that they do understand the situation and also appreciate the need for united action, the lack of which is bemoaned. Their passivity and inaction stem, among others, from the following factors:

1. Fear: known, unknown, of others, of each other.
2. Fostered factionalism—caste, politics.
3. Intense competition for survival, making cooperation incongruent.
4. A limited horizon/perception due to lack of contact with the outside world.
5. Lack of any success experience in collective endeavour.
6. Possibility of some 're-classing', turning threats into allies.
7. Feeling that past progress (removal of some indignities) was a 'gift' from a benevolent government.

While the fundamental contradiction in Sultanpur remains Jat exploitation, the major immediate obstacles to progress are (a) lack of self-confidence and (b) the various conflicts within the target group itself which prevent unity—though, as indicated in the list above, both the fear-ridden low self-esteem and disunity are not unrelated to the fundamental contradiction, particularly its long history.

The interest and animation with which the poor interacted with the investigators during the long sessions, losing their shyness and inhibitions after the first encounter, are themselves an indication of the possibilities which exist for activating the masses through non-bureaucratic interventions. All the fears and suspicions did not prevent the Jatavs and others from openly and freely discussing their problems and their roots. The role of the Jats and the corrupt officials was mentioned in a matter-of-fact manner and self-criticism of their own disunity was equally frank and rancourless.

Not only was there no reluctance to discuss the broader socio-political factors affecting them, there was on the contrary a desire to share the feelings and experience with others, including the 'outsiders'. The sharing itself seemed to create an atmosphere of unity which encompassed the investigators. It is only within this framework that specific proposals, economic and social, can be meaningfully discussed, with a clear mutual understanding that though the activity being considered has a specific objective and localized short-term benefit, its overall and cumulative effects have more general implications, shaping the processes which are the subject of the broader social discussion.

The creation of a regular forum for discussing both specific issues and broad questions must become a focal point around which a programme could be shaped. This educational process would help to resolve many of the negative factors listed above. The young could provide the change-oriented nucleus around which the forum could be built.

Examining the various specific contradictions, fortunately, the conflicts between religious and caste groups are not perceived by the people as antagonistic and are more a relic of past separateness which is being overcome by the young. A deliberate attempt to bring the communities together in social and cultural activities would reduce conflicts to a level where joint economic activities would be feasible.* Past (at least partial) unity on a political issue (election) is also encouraging. The disunity among the élite and the power struggle between the old established and the new ruling classes also affords an opportunity for creative manoeuvring.

The major task is to build up self-respect and confidence among the people by encouraging united effort in small cohesive groups (recognizing kinship links) around various concrete activities, the benefits of which, economic and otherwise, would encourage further united action. Discouragement and diffidence stemming from the past can only be overcome through demonstration of success.

Considerations in project design for Sultanpur

It is in a situation created by contradictions of varying order and intensity that a new development effort aimed at the poor has to operate. The immediate aims of the project must be in consonance with the present complex of the situation, objective and subjective, and progress towards these goals must pave the way for the next stage of development.

The assessment of the present situation shows that economic, social and political

* Experiments in the area have shown that the people, particularly the young, can be readily organized through activities such as games, adult education, youth clubs and skill (e.g. sewing) classes for women by young cadres of the kind described in the Annexure. In fact, entire villages can be mobilized for voluntary labour in road building, submerging age-old disputes including those pertaining to the land on which the road is built.

objectives are inseparable if progress is to be achieved. Keeping in mind the reality on the one hand, and the anxieties and subjective preparation of the target population in Sultanpur on the other, the following three objectives seem to emerge as appropriate at the present stage:

1. Improving material conditions of the poor.
2. Reducing the dependence of the poor on the rich.
3. Fostering unity among the poor by reducing various divisive tendencies and conflicts.

Progress towards the first two objectives would create material conditions for tackling the major problem, i.e. extreme Jat domination. Progress towards the third objective would not only facilitate the attainment of the first two by permitting united action, but would prepare the target group subjectively for the more difficult tasks of the next stage. The process of tackling the objectives is as important as the attainment of them, and the mix of activities should be so selected that the project remains 'open-ended', evolving to higher stages as the material conditions and the subjective preparation of the participants improve. Regardless of the desirability of externally perceived ultimate objectives, the credibility of the project, and of the promoters, depends on observable progress with the immediate objectives and concerns expressed by the people.

The dialogical probing of mass consciousness, while exposing a series of obstacles to united action, has also revealed items and activities where a beginning can be made, e.g. common ownership of means of production (oil engine), non-land-based agricultural activity (milch buffaloes), cottage industry (local cigarettes—'bidi'), etc. Although by themselves these seem like minor activities, experience in Bangladesh (see following chapter for details) shows that these small beginnings, accompanied by a participatory process built around local young cadres, lead to step-wise development whose long-term evolution has a manifold impact on the entire socio-economic situation of the village.

Though the situation in Sultanpur is more complex than that prevailing in the other cases described—the degree of disparity being much more pronounced and the conflicts within the target group greater—a similar process should work here also, with local nuances and timing being decided by the people in a continuous dialogue.

The educated unemployed youth are a positive force for change in the village and are the source of a local cadre for mobilizing the people, organizing various activities and building new institutions. They need linkages with groups in other villages and with broader-based organizations to (a) break the isolation, (b) exchange experiences and (c) build a countervailing network to balance Jat linkages.

Formation of a youth club could be one of the first activities in Sultanpur and could initiate the development process. The club, besides being a forum for discussion, could undertake concrete activities—cultural (plays around current social themes, inter-community festivals, etc.) and economic (poultry, pigs, production cooperatives in a small way, if part of the 150 acres of surplus land can be set aside for demonstration, and a shop in Sultanpur or even in Maya)—which would build social assets and sustain the interest of the members. Collectively they would be the cadres for organizing the others in the village. Efforts at adult literacy, technology dissemination, etc. could also be centred around the youth, as well as campaigns for health and sanitation.

The project should attempt to attract the

middle farmers, who at the moment are indifferent and somewhat fearful of the Jats. Their unity with the poor would add invaluable economic strength and special skills to the movement. Indeed, a careful analysis may also disclose a number of poorer Jats who, if they can be helped to overcome initial fears and prejudices, may find an alliance with the poor of other communities more beneficial than dependence on their richer Jat relations. The initial ground work would then consist of:

1. A broad dialogue with the target group as a whole and with the various communities separately on the current situation and the possibility of united action.
2. Discussion on specific activities which are immediately feasible (e.g. oil engine, buffaloes) and the initiation of these activities (including financing where necessary) to impart reality and credibility to the project.
3. Dialogue with the youth of various communities and the beginning of a process leading to the formation of a youth club.

Progress in the establishment of ground conditions can then be utilized to begin discussions on a more organized effort to formulate collectively a short- and long-term programme to meet the objectives of this phase of development. For example, the discussions may centre around the following elements in evolving the project.

1. *Resource survey*. The target group as a whole constitutes approximately 85 per cent of the population (non-Jat) and has 30 per cent (600 acres) of land. It has within it the best farmers (e.g. the gardener caste), all the artisan skills and the entire physical labour force.

However, all the above resources are under-utilized. Only a fraction of the 600 acres (100 acres?) is irrigated, utilizes the available new technology, or is devoted to highly labour-intensive and remunerative crops such as vegetables, seed production, etc. Skilled and unskilled labour is likewise under-utilized. Paid employment is concentrated in certain months and alternative uses of time (cottage industry, urban employment, animal production) are limited.

The first task of the people, particularly the youth, would be to make a more detailed survey of the resources (land, irrigation, crops, tools, labour availability and utilization month by month), which would create an awareness in the whole group of the potentialities as well as the obstacles in their realization.

2. *Formulation of a short-term plan*. The survey of resources may reveal a number of immediate steps which are feasible and beneficial for the entire group, though perhaps for some more than others. For instance, a more intensive crop pattern on the land of the hitherto self-sufficient middle farmers would benefit both them and the landless, whose employment opportunities would increase—and hence their bargaining power with the Jats. A public discussion of who would benefit and by how much from the activity would be educative and might ultimately lead to a self-corrective process. A mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activities along with its financial implications could become the village plan, which could be supported by the bank, replacing the earlier *ad hoc* projects.

3. *Evolution of a long-term plan*. The long-term plan could evolve through discussion of the possibilities of augmenting the resource base by investments in (a) land (irrigation, consolidation, levelling) and (b) non-land-based activities (processing, cottage industry, transportation), which would maximize output and labour utilization. The objective would be

to create, as far as possible, a self-reliant sub-economy in the village, whose dealings with the Jats would be on the basis of more equal strength. The greater the development of the sub-economy—the self-reliant 'base'—the greater would be the de-linkage from the Jat economy and consequently the lesser the exploitation through low wages, bonded labour and moneylending. As the ultimate effect, which is still remote in Sultanpur, the process might induce a more equitable distribution of land, as management of large areas with uncertain labour availability became difficult for the Jats and resistance to legal measures weakened.

The reduction of dependence on the Jats purely with external assistance (bank) would lead, however, to a new dependent relationship, which, while it may hasten the process, would not create either collective self-reliance or individual self-confidence. An attitude of independence has to be fostered from the beginning, and even at the risk of somewhat slower progress the group should be encouraged to (a) utilize fully its own resources, particularly labour, (b) innovate less capital-intensive methods and (c) generate regular internal savings (see the success of the Bangladesh experiment on the last point).

In a political sense, too great a reliance on external resources would mean dependence on the new entrepreneurial class with increasing external linkages. The target group would then lose the initiative in being able to develop its own strength and manoeuvre between the two contending classes. Becoming a junior partner of the new class would only perpetuate the subjugation of the oppressed. The tactical alliance with the entrepreneurial class should be on the basis of equality.

Apart from the internal effects of an external-aid oriented project, there are the broader considerations of its replicability. A heavily capital- and external-input-intensive project is an example which cannot serve as a model—it cannot be supported on a large scale due to scarcity of resources. The overall programme would then degenerate into a selective approach, with all its disparity-accentuating characteristics.

4. *Dialogue on tackling new contradictions.* While the deliberations on the village plan and the responsibility for implementing it would be collective, in keeping with the present level of consciousness, the production process and the benefits would be mainly individual. Because of the present differences in asset holdings, the benefits are bound to be distributed unevenly among the target group, thus creating fresh disparities and in all likelihood strengthening the new vested-interest class which is already challenging the Jats. Awareness of this contradiction, while it may lead to some corrective action, may also lead to disruption of an alliance which is necessary at this stage.

At the present level of subjective preparation and technological base, the contradiction cannot be resolved by collectivization of production. However, the beneficiaries of the increased production may be persuaded to consider the creation of a collective social fund out of the increased earning, which may be proportional to the benefits derived. The activities of the group as a whole—e.g. marketing, sale of inputs and consumer goods, etc.—could also add to the social assets and the fund, whose utilization could be collectively decided. The examples of Bangladesh and the dialogue in Thailand show the possibility of creating such a fund and the possible equitable methods of utilizing it, e.g. life insurance, medical benefits, educational (academic and technical) scholarships, disaster relief, indivi-

dual aid, etc. It could also be used to construct collectively owned small-scale industry, which would increase employment.

Such an approach would mitigate the effect of increasing disparities within the target group, though not avoid the problem altogether. It would also provide concrete issues for the regular discussion forum which has educative value. Creation of some social assets and collective values would be a contribution towards preparing for the next stage of the project.

Maintenance of a creative balance between immediate individual material gains and the fostering of socially desirable values is a delicate task for all societies, and at the moment it can only be tackled empirically in actual situations.

The launching of a project of the kind described above would need an initiating cadre. Moreover, to sustain the momentum, Sultanpur cannot undertake such a project as an isolated island in a static surrounding. One approach to the creation of such a cadre and the multiplication of village projects, the Farmers' Service Society Programme, is described in the Annexure.

Annexure: The organization of Farmers' Service societies

India is experimenting with a new institutional form for the organization of the rural poor, which if successful will be multiplied on a large scale. The utility and feasibility of the institutional form, the process of its formation and the method of its multiplication are the subject of experimentation and concurrent evaluation (action research).

The Farmers' Service Society (FSS) will be a multipurpose cooperative controlled by the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers, though the larger farmers will not be excluded from its services. The societies will be supported financially and managerially by the public sector banks, particularly the 50 newly established rural banks, whose primary objective is to reach the rural poor. The initial experimental programme envisages the establishment of 10 to 20 societies in the area of operation of each rural bank. Each FSS will cover about 10 villages, with a total population of approximately 10,000. In a village with a population of 1,000 people, or 200 families, the FSS will initially try to reach the poorest 100 families and organize them into small activity groups, linked together in an 'assembly' of all the participants. A federation of 10 such village groupings will constitute the FSS, which will assist the village groups in organizing activities and in coordinating supplies, services, marketing and credit.

The formal arrangements described above are mainly enabling provisions to aid and not to straitjacket the organic evolution of true people's organizations, starting from the ground level. While the formal FSS, though 'multipurpose', will mainly interest itself in economic activities, the village-level organizations will have a much broader concern and the range of their interests and activities will be circumscribed only by the aspirations, desires, imagination and creativity of the participants, bound neither by restrictive maxima nor by prescriptive minima.

The organizational soul of the FSS experiment is the character, source and training of the process-initiating cadres, and action research is being conducted on their recruitment and training. Learning from past experience, it was agreed that the cadres should have the following characteristics:

1. They should be composed of young men and women around 25 years of age, who are not tainted by previous exposure to structured jobs.
2. They should have analytical ability but not necessarily academic qualifications or a knowledge of English, a usual prerequisite for employment.
3. They should not be looking for long-term secure 'careers'.
4. They should preferably be from a rural background.

5. They should have a socio-economic background or personal values which would facilitate their task of integration with the rural poor.

Out of the thousands who responded to advertisements in the local vernacular papers, the first batch of about 100 has been chosen through a vigorous field-camp selection process based on exposure to the village situation, group discussion and individual interview. The experience gives confidence that, contrary to stereotypic expectations, it is not impossible to collect a group of young cadres who have an interest in and an aptitude for the hard organizational work.

The cadres are now undergoing a six-month training in rural locations, the basis of which is 'praxis': (a) exposure to the village situation and intimate dialogue with the people, (b) analysis of the situation along with the faculty, (c) formulation of a small 'project' to be carried out in the village with the target group (e.g. adult literacy, youth club), (d) implementation of the project, (e) analysis of the experience and conceptualization.

Actual experience in understanding the socio-economic situation of the villages, heightened by experience (positive and negative) in intervening in a situation, will give the cadres first-hand knowledge of 'peasant economics', which will be reinforced by written experiences of others. This basic experience, which is premised on the participants discovering the truths for themselves, is being supported by factual information on technology, governmental programmes, cooperative laws, banking, etc., which contribute to the environment in which they will operate.

At the end of the training, the cadres will start work in the area of operation of the rural banks. Their first tasks will be to familiarize themselves with the local area which will be organized into an FSS (e.g. the kind of survey that has been made here of Sultanpur), to integrate themselves with the target group and to identify potential leaders and young cadres in each village (e.g. the experience described in the Bangladesh case) who will be the nucleus of the organization. Each village, each situation, will be distinctive and there is no set formula or manual for the work of the cadres. Their six-month training exposure may make them sensitive enough to seek out an appropriate strategy for each situation and to learn from experience.

It is visualized that, over time, the local young cadres will take over fully from the initiating cadres, leaving the latter free to 'spearhead' the process elsewhere—a method of multiplication which has to be tested and evolved through experience.

The experiment is at its inception. Many issues—e.g. organization of the initiating cadres to exchange and sum up experiences, determination of the 'target group' in a given situation to preclude penetration and capture by the exploiting classes, while forming a broad enough alliance of others, etc.—are yet to be faced, empirically tackled and the experience analysed. This will be the role of concurrent evaluation, which should help to mould policies as the programme evolves.

2 The Comilla Experiment and the Total Village Development Programme—Bangladesh

Introduction

Recently, a rural development project called 'Total Village Development' (TVD) has been launched in five villages of the Kotwali Thana in the district of Comilla, Bangladesh, under the auspices of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD). These villages are: Deeder (an amalgam of two villages, namely, Kashinathpar and Balarampur),

North Rampur, South Rampur, Joypur and Jorepushkarini.

Faculty members of the BARD are intimately involved in the project, which is one of the many activities of the Comilla Academy in its 'social laboratory'—the Kotwali Thana. As such it has its historical roots in the Comilla Experiment begun by Akhtar Hameed Khan—the Founder-Director of the Academy. These roots will be traced in the following sections.

There is, however, another historical root to the project—and one of a more profound nature. This is the 1971 independence war, which brought together thousands of patriotic youth. A great many of these were members of the Mukti Bahini ('Liberation Army'). Many others were involved in pre-thinking the post-independence reconstruction and development work in the countryside of Bangladesh. The political leadership at that time was committed to the idea of raising a rural development cadre from these thousands of aroused and motivated young men and women.

Independence came in December 1971. As a follow-up to the wartime pledge, the Ministry of Rural Development, Cooperatives and Local Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh commissioned, in June 1972, a manual for rural development from the BARD. The idea was to raise a rural development cadre from the young returnees from the Mukti Bahini—one cadre being placed in every union, which in its turn was to recruit rural youth from the villages under the union.

The commissioned manual emerged from the BARD in 1974. But no development cadre was recruited from the thousands of young people who were eager for an organized thrust into the countryside. Instead, the once-aroused youth took, in sheer desperation and frustration, to any pursuit that came their way. Some, however, did return to their native villages still dreaming about 'Sonar Bangla'—Golden Bengal—and a few among them started rural programmes on their own in isolated corners of Bangladesh.

Although the youth were not mobilized by the government for any development work, there was an official policy on rural development. This is the so-called Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The IRDP in Bangladesh is an attempt at replicating the Comilla Experiment in other areas of the country, i.e. spreading the Comilla model from the 'social laboratory' in Kotwali Thana, where it was applied and tested initially.

The results of the IRDP experiments have not come anywhere near the aspirations of the youth who were directly or indirectly involved in the war of independence. As was noted, some of these patriots have started autonomous, *ad hoc* projects of their own, but all fall within the geographical coverage of IRDP as the nationwide official programme. These few private projects (the well-known People's Health Centre at Savar Thana being one of them) coexist with the official IRDP projects in the pockets where the former have been launched.

The Total Village Development Programme of the BARD resembles the private activities inspired by the patriotic youth. But there is a difference. It is a BARD activity. The TVD Programme needs, therefore, to be seen in the full focus of the Comilla Experiment in its social laboratory—the Kotwali Thana.

The problematic in Comilla: the mode of production[1]

With the removal of the Hindu Zamindars, which was the economic motivation for the

Muslim Bengal nationalism that resulted in the partition of Bengal in 1947, feudalism in its classical form disappeared from the region that became East Pakistan. Land came to be owned by individual peasant proprietors. Ownership size varied, however, and this along with other differential circumstances—the possession of other agricultural and non-agricultural assets, access to inputs, marketing, extra-village connections, etc.—placed the peasantry into landless, small, medium and rich categories. By the end of the 1950s the small and medium comprised about 80 per cent, the landless 15 per cent and the rich 5 per cent of the peasantry.

The landless had to sell their labour power in order to eke out a living. The small peasants did not have enough land for subsistence, so they had to share-crop on the land of the rich. The middle peasants depended basically on family labour, which was supplemented by hired labour during peak seasons of sowing, planting and harvesting. The rich did little farm work. They hired wage labour for the parts of their land which they managed directly and the rest was share-cropped out in a semi-feudal manner. They also engaged in moneylending and trading.

The mode of production was thus of a complex nature, combining subsistence farming, family farming with hired labour in peak seasons, semi-feudal share-cropping and semi-capitalistic farming. The land concentration was not pronounced; a rich farmer's holding barely exceeded seven acres. A great portion of the total land was diffused over a large number of small and medium peasants, and this blunted the edge of class differentiation.

Exploitation was basically of three types. The most predominant perhaps was usury. The poor peasant needed paddy for subsistence before the next harvest was brought home, and the small and middle peasant needed cash to buy cattle, or to defray ceremonial expenses like weddings, funerals, etc. Loans through the banking system were not available to these credit-risk peasants. The only source was the rich farmer-moneylender-trader class, who advanced credit at exorbitant rates against the mortgage of land. More often than not, the poor could not recover this mortgaged land. This was the principal method of land transfer whereby the rich became richer and the poor became poorer.

The second form of exploitation was the excessively high rate of share-cropping rental: 50 per cent of the produce with no production cost shared by the landlord as a rule. The third type was the appropriation of surplus value from the wage labourer.

The small and landless peasantry suffered most from these production relations, which had on the whole a semi-feudal character. As share-croppers, borrowers and wage-earners, they were dependent on the rich peasant-moneylender-trader class for their subsistence. This economic dependency of the majority of the peasants on the village rich enabled social and political powers in the village to be concentrated in the latter, strengthened further by various patron-client and kinship relations. The organs of the state were hardly effective or neutral enough in the village to give the poor the civil and legal rights of a bourgeois order.

While the middle farmers were not immediately in so precarious a position, their long-run viability as a class was in question, (a) because of the subdivision of land that was inevitable as population grew, and (b) because they also needed credit from time to time and were thus susceptible to the vicious circle of land mortgage, usury and land transfer. The fundamental contradiction in the mode of production as

a dynamic process was thus the contradiction between the rich farmer-moneylender-trader class on the one hand and the landless, land-poor and middle peasants on the other hand.

The Comilla Experiment

Akhtar Hameed Khan's Comilla Experiment was not addressed to this fundamental contradiction in the mode of production, but sought to tackle instead a contradiction which he saw between the small and middle peasants on the one hand and the rich farmer-moneylender-trader class on the other in the context of developing the forces of production in agriculture, primarily through the adoption of the modern Green Revolution technology of the high-yield variety (HYV).

Several tasks were involved in developing the production forces through this process. First, knowledge about the tube-well and pump technology, as well as about the seeds and fertilizers, had to be imparted to the peasants. This required the provision of adequate training facilities. Secondly, in order to deploy the knowledge, tube-wells and pumps for winter irrigation and farming equipment—tractors, harvesters, etc.—had to be acquired and installed. Thirdly, seeds and fertilizers needed to be procured and distributed to the peasants. Fourthly, in lieu of the exploitative source of credit from the moneylender, alternative credit facilities had to be arranged. Fifthly, to protect the monsoon crops—aus and aman—from the recurring floods, appropriate drainage and embankment programmes were necessary. Finally, a network of roads was a badly needed infrastructure.

Akhtar Hameed Khan wanted these tasks to be accomplished so as to guarantee 'production, protection and distribution', particularly for the small and middle peasantry vis-à-vis the rich. Such a programme, however, was beyond the reach of the small and medium peasants individually; only by organizing them for united action could they be protected from the clutches of the moneylenders-cum-traders and adopt the new technology. Akhtar Hameed Khan saw the possibility of a solution to this problem in the formation of cooperatives among his target group. Not only could these replace the moneylenders, they could also provide the bond for concerted action for improved farming and serve as 'trade unions' for the small farmers.

Forming such cooperatives meant introducing some new elements and discarding some old elements in the existing relations of production. The particular aspect of the existing relations of production that had to be replaced was the traditional cooperative, which was dominated by the rich farmers. These old-style cooperatives existed in 4,200 unions, out of a total of 4,500 unions in the country. Euphemistically called Union Multi-purpose Cooperative Societies (UMPCS), they served the sole purpose of providing credit for the rich farmers with a phenomenal default rate. Nominally the poor also qualified, but they were largely bypassed, for the simple reason that the rich farmers controlled these cooperatives politically.

Thus there was an obvious contradiction between the forces of production—the productive potentials of the small and middle peasantry—that Akhtar Hameed Khan wanted to help develop, and the relations of production in the form of the cooperatives through which the modern technology and the services associated with it were to reach his target group. The rich farmers who stood to gain from retention of the traditional cooperatives were naturally hostile to their liquidation.

The government, not as committed as the initiator of the Comilla Experiment to the small and middle peasants, opted for the coexistence of both the old and new cooperatives, and it is within this framework that Akhtar Hameed Khan launched the organization of the small and middle peasantry with his famous two-tier cooperative system: the village level Krishi Samabay Samiti (KSS) and thana level Thana Central Cooperative Association (TCCA).

Even on his own terms, however, Akhtar Hameed Khan could not get the cooperatives that he needed, for the cooperative law permitted membership of virtually all peasants—marginal, small, medium and rich—in the new cooperatives. This approach, therefore, could not de-link the small and middle farmers from the rich, but merely created another arena where the contradictions between them were to be fought out.

Initially, the reaction of the vested interests—the rich farmers—to the new cooperatives was to denounce them, and to intimidate the small peasants and discourage them from joining. The new cooperatives, they argued, involved the nuisance of service fees, weekly contributions, weekly meetings, austerity and hardship. Could the poor people afford it? The old cooperatives were much better, as they required none of this. The middle peasantry, however, responded well to the new cooperatives, as the provision of seeds, fertilizers, water, etc. meant more output and the promise of greater surplus. This demonstration of economic benefit gradually awakened the rich farmer-moneylender-trader to the realization that here was a new medium of enrichment. Using his social power, he could take the lion's share of the cooperatives' loan capital and then default, as he was doing in the old cooperatives. He could also oversee the fertilizer dealership, and locate the tube-wells and pumps at points to his advantage. His subsequent reaction was, therefore, first to 'infiltrate' the new cooperatives and then to start dominating their management committees. This was not a difficult step, for membership of the management committee was through elections, and the rich farmer had enough social and political power to get himself elected. As a rule, therefore, the new cooperatives were soon 'electing' managing committees dominated by the rich farmer-moneylender-trader class.

As for the marginal and small farmers, some of them also joined the new cooperatives. But with the rich dominating the management committees, discussions always centred round tube-wells, pumps and fertilizers, while their basic problems—terms of tenancy, food shortage, indebtedness, credit needs to release mortgaged land—were not on the agenda. The expensive inputs (obtainable on the black market as far as they were concerned) were of secondary interest to them as operators of tiny plots of land. So many of them slowly quit these cooperatives, and thereby discouraged the overwhelming majority of their kind from joining. Meanwhile, the old process of land transfer from this class to the rich farmer-moneylender went on.

The above pattern was almost universal. The one exception was the Kotwali Thana—the social laboratory of the Comilla Academy—where, because of the Academy's direct involvement and weight, the interests of small peasants were not totally ignored. They even had some representation in the management committee, while the middle peasant had significant representation there.

While, as a rule, the traditional vested interests have retained their dominance in the economic and social scene, the Comilla cooperatives have given rise to a new class of innovating peasantry—the 'model farmer'—born

out of the middle peasants who have responded most to the intended discipline and outlook of Akhtar Hameed Khan's experiment. These model farmers are efficient, thrifty, hard-working and investment-conscious. They have taken seriously the training of the Comilla project in the use of modern inputs, farm management, cost accounting, etc. and have also responded to the project's invocation to spread the new technology to fellow peasants. They have thereby made tremendous gains in productivity, income and local esteem. After the initial spurt, however, they have experienced a decline in opportunities for further gains in productivity through innovation and investment, essentially because of inadequate changes in the relations of production. In particular, they are in contradiction with an inefficient bureaucracy in charge of the delivery system and with the rich farmer-moneylender-traders, who control the management committees of cooperatives, appropriate many of the deliveries for racketeering, thus forcing the middle peasants to buy them on the black market at exorbitant prices, and dominate the existing marketing system in alliance with their urban linkages.

On the other hand, the relation of this new class of model farmers with the landless and land-poor peasantry is of a dual character. The model farmer, for instance, prefers that the cooperative buys rice-husking machines and employs the landless and land-poor peasants for rice milling and husking, as this will break the monopoly of the private rice traders and middlemen in the business, improve the income of the cooperative and hence increase benefits to the middle farmer himself via provision of more credit and other services. On this reckoning, the model farmer considers the poor as an ally against the trading oligarchy. However, he does not support the separate organization of the poor—for he also, after all, exploits them by hiring them as wage labourers, and thereby extracts surplus value that contributes to his accumulation.

To sum up, the Comilla Experiment sought to resolve the contradiction between the rich on the one hand and the middle to small peasantry on the other hand in favour of the latter, through the instrument of the new cooperatives. However, except in the Kotwali Thana, the rich managed to dominate these new cooperatives and to turn them to their own advantage. But many middle farmers also benefited, and in the model farmers in particular an emerging new class is visible. This new class is in contradiction with the traditional, rich farmer-moneylender-traders and their external alliances in the bureaucracy and the marketing system; further development of this class as a productive force is thwarted by the economic and political power of the latter.

While the contribution of the Comilla Experiment has been to generate the above new contradiction, the fundamental contradiction in the mode of production remains that between the rich farmer-moneylender-trader class on the one hand and the middle to small to landless peasantry on the other. The process of land transfer through the mortgage system has continued, turning many middle peasants into small, the small into poor, and the land-poor into landless peasantry. The proportion of landless and land-poor peasants is higher today than in the 'sixties. These poor peasants, together with the unemployed rural youth, constitute the major antithesis in the mode of production and in a sense in the Comilla Experiment itself, which brought the Green Revolution to the rich and middle peasantry thereby enhancing the latter's economic power and thus facilitating, perhaps, the process of land transfer away from the land-

poor while detracting attention from this process of polarization.

It is this fundamental contradiction that has been picked up by the more 'patriotic' elements in Comilla recently, to launch the Total Village Development Programme.

The Total Village Development Programme

Akhtar Hameed Khan looked at a village as a community forming, as it were, a tiny republic. His vision of the 'republic' was a self-sufficient community producing everything but 'salt and oil' and guaranteeing 'production, protection and distribution'. His cooperative, he regretted later, achieved production but failed to distribute it equitably and to protect the poor.

The landless and marginal peasantry were not directly in Akhtar Hameed Khan's target group. He did, however, encourage a cooperative named 'Deeder' of landless rickshaw-pullers in two villages of Kotwali Thana. In Galimpur Union of Barua Thana, Comilla, there was also a strong autonomous association of poor peasants, who in view of their earlier organized strength could use the cooperative in their favour. For example, the cooperative bought spraying machines and lent them to two landless families who sprayed rice fields in the cooperative. But apart from these isolated instances, the Comilla cooperative system did little to resolve the contradiction between the landless, land-poor and share-croppers on the one hand and the rich peasant-moneylender-trader group on the other. Granted that whenever the new technology was adopted some trickle-down in the form of higher employment and higher wages took place, the basic contradiction remained.

Still moving within the community concept of a village, the Comilla Academy made further moves in accommodating the aims of 'production, protection and distribution'. Thus in April 1972 the Academy hosted a seminar on the possibility of cooperative farming based on the pooling of land of individual owners. The result was four attempts at cooperative farming during the 1972–3 winter boro crop season in four different places: Bamail at Comilla, Shimla at Mymensingh, Rangunia at Chittagong and Gurudaspur at Rajshahi. Later, several other attempts were made: for example, the Fasal project at Aramullah Beel of Rouzan Thana of Chittagong, the CORR project at Birol Thana of Dinajpur, etc. Apart from Bamail, significant economic gains were achieved by all classes of participants—landowners, landless farm workers and share-croppers. This sort of experimentation is certainly a more advanced stage of cooperativization than before. While not resolving the contradictions, such attempts create some positive values as far as the exploited are concerned.

In the train of the political changes since the middle of 1975, a new attempt to tackle rural poverty and inequality has been made. This is the 'Swanirvar' (Self-Reliance) Movement. The idea originated in the Comilla Academy as a result of the devastating flood and famine of 1974. The full programme was launched in late 1975 by the new government with the active involvement of the Academy. A six-tier swanirvar system has been designed in order—hopefully—to bring people, development officers, bureaucrats, and leaders of local government and cooperatives together and to remove the administrative conflicts in the area. It further seeks to develop local areas by mobilizing local resources and giving some participatory roles in planning and decision making to the landless, land-poor, youth, women, etc.

In practice, however, the system is highly bureaucratic and the village swanirvar committees are dominated by the traditional vested interests.

In view of the inadequacies of the Comilla-type TCCA-KSS cooperatives (which bypassed the rural poor) and the Swanirvar Movement (which became too bureaucratic), the BARD decided to undertake another experiment—the Total Village Development Programme—in the five villages of Kotwali Thana named earlier (page 89). The idea was to design programmes involving all groups of rural people and embracing multiple activities beyond crop raising. Two meetings were held. The participants were the BARD faculty, TCCA-KSS personnel from Kotwali Thana, thana level officials of the national building departments and village representatives from different groups.

In these meetings, it was decided that the existing village cooperative institution, i.e. KSS, would be remodelled 'with the inclusion of every villager in the society'. The KSS Managing Committee would be reorganized into six subcommittees, representing target groups such as landless, mini-farmers, youth, women, religious leaders, rich-middle farmers, etc. The development programme was to be organized around either the KSS or the youth organization in each village.

As the idea came to be operationalized, it was found that the TCCA personnel attached to the five villages did not cooperate with the programme; the thana level officials were not enthusiastic either. It became clear that the traditional rural power élite were in no hurry to help evolve projects for the deprived groups. One unified organization was found unsuitable to cater for different target groups. So the groups were advised to form their own organizations and undertake their own programmes. Among the selected five villages, Deeder, having a good primary organization serving most of the target groups for a number of years, saw no need for separate organizations. In each of the four other villages, two organizations—one for the youth and one for the landless and land-poor—are now in place. The development of each organization and their relationship to each other are instructive and are providing the BARD—which is intimately involved in guiding and studying the programme—with valuable insights on the evolution of mass organization.*

The youth clubs

Youth clubs have recently been formed in the four villages, viz., North Rampur, South Rampur, Joypur and Jorepushkarini. There is, however, a long history of these clubs. In fact, youth clubs were organized back in 1960 in the Kotwali Thana under the auspices of the Academy. But the initial enthusiasm died down and the programme was dropped. The 1971 independence war infused new vitality into the youth but, as we noted earlier, nothing came out of the much-expected programme of mobilization of the young people after independence. The devastating flood and famine of 1974 gave another opportunity for the Academy to attempt to organize the youth. In consequence, 52 youth clubs now exist in 52 villages of the Kotwali Thana. The young people belong to the 13 to 25 age group. The villages belong to 12 different unions. The primary organizations federate into a thana organization. The village clubs hold weekly meetings and the thana organization meets fortnightly.

* Recorded in a series of progress reports compiled by Mr Debabratta Datta-Gupta, Deputy Director BARD, the initiator of the programme.

The programme is under the overall supervision of the Academy, where the members receive periodic training.

Though many leading members of these youth clubs come from families belonging to the rich farmer-moneylender-trader category, they are in contradiction with their parents' semi-feudal world view and exploitation of the landless and land-poor. The parents want them to have higher education, leave the village and settle in good jobs. The youth argue that there are no jobs waiting for them in the cities after graduation. They have to create their jobs in the villages, and that, they reason, requires overall development of the villages, mobilizing both the youth and the main work-force—the landless and land-poor.

The declared objective of the youth club is to mobilize rural resources and undertake multifarious developmental activities on the motto of 'self-reliance, self-criticism, self-respect, self-purification, discipline, diligence and respect for manual labour'. Each club undertakes its economic activities, i.e. production, marketing, savings and investment, through a cooperative. Some of the productive activities are undertaken individually—some collectively. They are described below.

1. *Private farming*. A landowning peasant family always leaves some land idle on the homestead—pond-side, road-side, etc. The youth of the family now privately grow vegetables and other crops on these patches of land.
2. *Poultry and livestock*. There is water in ponds and rice plots for most of the year, providing good opportunity for duckeries. There is also room on the homestead for chickens to scavenge around. The youth-club members undertook joint duckeries on a trial basis, but later took it up individually, having discovered that this was more cost-effective. Attempts at undertaking poultry and livestock projects with better breeds are in an experimental stage.
3. *Joint farming*. The youth club leases and share-crops land for joint cultivation.
4. *Pond fishery*. There are many ponds in the villages, but rarely is a pond owned by a single family. The owner-partners, due to family quarrels and lack of knowledge, let the ponds lie derelict or uncared for. The youth club leases such ponds and raises fish as a cooperative activity.
5. *Education*. The youth clubs have started schools for adult education and primary education. They have also opened small libraries.
6. *Public health*. In some villages, the youth clubs have undertaken the following activities: vaccination against cholera and smallpox, improvement of latrines, clearing wild vegetation, drainage improvement, supply of drinking water, etc.
7. *Culverts, roads and bridges*. As part of the Swanirvar Movement, the youth of some villages have undertaken the repair and construction of roads, culverts and bridges.
8. *Family planning*. The members of youth clubs—male and female—have organized birth-control campaigns.
9. *Village defence*. The youth-club members have formed village self-defence squads.
10. *Landless and land-poor*. One of the major activities of youth clubs is to organize the rural poor and provide work for them. The next section discusses this programme in detail.

Of all these activities, pond fishery stands out prominently. The youth can exploit only such marginal resources as ponds, unused land on the homestead and road-sides to create collective funds. The rich landowners in Kotwali do not like to lease and share-crop their land,

[I] The process by which the ponds are leased is illustrative of the combination of persuasion and pressure that the youth employ. There are many owners of each pond, and the youth visit each owner-family separately and politely propose to the head of the family the idea of leasing the pond. The young men would say, 'Uncle, you are not using it, anyway. Why not give us the pond? We are unemployed; we will make some money and you will get some too.' The 'uncle' would say, 'You see, I don't mind, but the partners will not agree.' Upon further pleading, the owner would deflect the issue by saying 'Go, talk to your aunt.' And the aunt answers, 'Sorry, we are not leasing the pond to you; once you take it, we will not get it back.' At this stage, finding that politeness will not achieve the objective, the youth may hint that they may use the pond anyway. Their collective pressure finally brings the owners around. While such tactics by village youth are not unknown, the motives and purpose are novel.

However, the youth have been unable to expand their activities beyond these local successes for lack of resources, even if these are lying unused. For example, some young men tried to lease a stretch of the river Gumti for commercial fishing. But their application to the bureaucrats involved, both local and central, evoked no response. Only a larger and more powerful union of the local clubs may be able to exert pressures in the extra-village decision centres.

even though this means ill-management and bad supervision due to the owners' involvement in various other activities, such as trade, moneylending, settling village disputes and all other semi-feudal chores.[I] These self-generated collective funds are the material basis on which the youth clubs have been able to organize the poor, backing up persuasion with concrete economic proposals and financial assistance to raise the latter's income.

Organizations of landless and land-poor

The youth clubs have chosen the organization of the landless and land-poor as one of the key planks in their programme. These people are tied to the exploiting group through the age-old forms of semi-feudal bondage. While they are aware of the benefits of organized action, they have accepted their dependency in the absence of a practical alternative. It is this alternative that the youth are activating.

The process of organizing the poor has been slow and has required patience and diligence on the part of the youth.[II] Over a period of time, experience has been gathered by each youth club and then shared with others through the fortnightly meetings. While persuasion has been supplemented by pressure in dealing with the rich, in approaching and organizing the poor, individual and group persuasion have been backed up not only with a discussion of concrete economic possibilities[III] but also with specific financial assistance which the collective youth club funds have made possible. This combination of 'education' and material benefit has increased the confidence of the poor in themselves and in their organization, forging further, close bonds with the youth. A solid foundation seems to have been laid for a stage by stage

evolution of the organization and of the development programme.*

The land-poor are also gradually joining the organization. Though they own small plots of land, they also share-crop and sell their labour. Many of them realize that they are on the road to losing their land through mortgage and inheritance—the road the landless have already traversed. In terms of earnings, they are no better off than the landless. Historically, in many other societies, they belonged to the same class. In addition to the small physical assets, this group often brings to the organization a somewhat better educational base, particularly in accounts. The alliance is therefore mutually beneficial.

The rich, individually and through the KSS, are watching the development of the mass organizations carefully.** However, because of a number of factors—general social climate preceded by a series of social upheavals, the involvement of the youth, the prestige of the Academy—they are unable to disrupt the growing unity and strength of the poor. That the process can go very far indeed if carefully evolved is demonstrated by the example of Deeder, with 15 years of organizational experience.

[II] The usual procedure of organization is like this. The energetic leader of the village youth club begins the round of evening visits to the homes of the target group one by one. He talks to them, explains the benefits to be derived from an organization, and so on. The listener is, however, suspicious and sceptical of the hypothetical benefits. He has only seen exploiters in the guise of benefactors all his life. More explanations and more persuasion follow. Finally, a meeting of the landless and landpoor takes place—some come, some watch. An association is formed. Provisions for weekly meetings and a modest saving deposit of one taka per member are made. In the meetings, the youth leaders come and prod. The 'illiterate' peasants are encouraged to 'give speeches' and discuss their problems. The youth club promises to tide over their credit needs, advance some money out of the youth-club funds to buy a couple of rickshaws, a net, some yarn, etc. But the association of the poor must first save up a little through thrift deposits to qualify. Slowly, the poor realize the possibilities. A modest process of capital accumulation gets started.

[III] How simple and immediate the needs of the poor are was demonstrated in one of the meetings we attended. One landless peasant, when pressed, felt that the basic need was land and cattle. The immediate need was credit to survive until he raised his paddy from share-cropping. Another said he didn't like farm work, but greatly enjoyed fishing. His need was a net. Nobody talked about anything fancier than that. At this level of living and aspirations, they need very modest help. When asked about the future line of action, they kept quiet. At this, the leader of the youth club intervened. He said it was not good to talk about advanced ideas. The people could not respond to them. It is a better work-style to let them feel their needs and advance accordingly, rather than going one or two steps ahead of their thinking. We found that through the youth club's resources, these elementary needs were being met and the poor peasants were paying back through regular instalments. They do not default.

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* The leader of the youth club explained that he had to plan almost from season to season. No long-term plan was feasible. But the next step he had in mind was to demand agricultural inputs—fertilizer, water, etc.—for the association of landless and land-poor. The landowner will have the land; the landless will have the other input-package. That will be a good situation for collective bargaining.

** We attended a meeting of the landless and land-poor in one village. Not unexpectedly, the secretary of the KSS came. Although a separate organization, it seems that the rural power élite keep an eye on them through their official representative. A local 'tout' was also on hand. The tout was well dressed and announced himself as one of the disciples of Akhtar Hameed Khan. He tried to monopolize the meeting, claiming to speak for the poor peasants.

Evolution of the Deeder Cooperative

The two villages of Kashinathpur and Balarampur are situated on opposite sides of the main road linking the city of Comilla with the BARD. The Deeder Cooperative is a primary society serving both these villages. The office premises stand on the roadside about two miles away from the city and a mile or so from the Academy.

Mr Yasin, the initiator of the project, comes from a small-peasant family. He was once in the police force of East Pakistan, but quit after a general strike and set up a tea stall in the Deeder area. He had about 1½ acres of land. With his income from both sources—land and shop—he was able to buy five rickshaws. Rickshaw-pullers, renting rickshaws both from Yasin and other owners, used to come to his stall for a cup of tea and gossip.

Yasin was in contact with the Academy and became interested in the cooperative experiments of Akhtar Hameed Khan. He noticed that there was no programme in these experiments for the poor rickshaw-pullers and other segments of the landless and land-poor. Determined to do something about it, he sought Khan's help. Khan advised him to organize his target group and collect thrift deposits for a while, and then to meet him again.

Yasin started talking. Not only did he face opposition from the privileged, but the deprived also showed no enthusiasm; they recalled many other previous attempts—like Dharmagola—at collective accumulation and individual appropriation. They would not trust him. Disappointed but not disheartened, he called his five rickshaw-pullers and a few others and asked them to contribute token deposits. He promised that, should he default, he would let them eat free of charge at his stall until their contributed funds were recouped.

Eight people came around. Yasin and these eight collected an initial fund of nine annas, each contributing one anna (one-sixteenth of a rupee). Thus started the process of a weekly one-anna thrift deposit per member. Others began to join, and the Deeder Cooperative Society of rickshaw-pullers was born in 1960 under the Academy's Pilot Cooperative Scheme. When a small sum was accumulated, investment seemed possible. Collective deliberation among the members resulted in the decision to buy two old rickshaws. Two members were identified by the general body, and the rickshaws were given to them. By instalment payment, in less than a year, the cost of the rickshaws and a profit of Rs. 50 were paid back to the Cooperative and the two men became owners of the rickshaws.

This process of buying more and more rickshaws snowballed, and others began to join the Cooperative. By 1963, membership had shot up to 126 and capital accumulation stood at Rs. 6,000. Now there was enough money saved up, and enough confidence and experience gathered, to go in for something bigger. In 1964, with the help of the Academy, Yasin and his colleagues were able to get a loan of Rs. 41,000 from the Kotwali TCCA. The society bought a truck and again succeeded in paying back the loan, from the highly profitable trucking operation, within a short period of time.

By 1965 enough capital had been saved up to launch another operation—a brick kiln. Land was rented from members and non-members and a loan of Rs. 150,000 was arranged with the TCCA. Brick making became a new, successful, cooperative activity. The trucking operation was expanded by the addition of three more trucks. By 1967, there were 257 members in the society, and membership now became broad-based. Not everybody was in

non-farming occupations—many peasants joined. The society could thus begin to think of pure farming as an additional activity.

Under the sponsorship of the Academy, Deeder launched the first cooperative farming experiment in the boro season of 1968. Sixty acres of land were leased from both members and non-members at the rate of 20 maunds of rice per acre (approx. 25 maunds = 1 ton). The Academy provided technical knowledge, while the TCCA made water, fertilizers and related inputs available. The yield rate was way above average—the published figure was 52 maunds per acre. It would have been 70 maunds per acre had there been smooth harvesting, but there was a delay in the delivery of combine harvesters from the TCCA, and heavy showers meanwhile caused the ripe paddy to germinate. Threshing and drying of the paddy became difficult, as proper facilities for such a large-scale operation had not previously been developed. These and other factors, including high operating costs, caused a net loss of Rs. 7,000 to the society.

The next year the owners reverted to individual farming, refusing to try cooperative farming again. Meanwhile, however, they had learnt the technology of high-yielding boro rice. Having acquired the knowledge collectively, they proceeded individually to exploit it.

Having failed in collective agriculture, the society concentrated on non-agricultural activities. The aim of raising share capital from nine annas in 1960 to Rs. 900,000 in 1986 was decided on. The annual targets, in the process of climbing to this height, continued to be over-fulfilled. In 1975, three tractors were bought for transportation. Given the road conditions, it was felt that tractors had an advantage over trucks as a transport device.

It was found that some individual members, having bought their rickshaws through instalment payments, later sold them to defray marriage and other expenses and eventually turned to private rickshaw-owners. To forestall such future eventualities, the cooperative decided to own the rickshaws and rent them out to members on a daily rate of nine takas, out of which two takas would be deposited in their name—a sort of forced saving. Deeder is now also assembling rickshaws as a first step towards another advanced stage of diversification, namely, manufacturing.

The society offers certain banking services as well. First, the two-taka weekly savings are converted into shares for members. Secondly, current accounts exist for safe-keeping only—bearing no interest. Non-members also can keep their savings at no interest. Thirdly, there is a one-year term deposit bearing 15 per cent interest (as compared with the normal bank rate of 7 per cent). Finally, interest-free credits up to one-quarter of share value are available to members up to one year—beyond that period, 12 per cent interest is charged.

There are also several contributory funds run on the basis of ability to pay. These are medicare, life insurance, school supplies, technical education, loss fund, tube-well purchase fund, charity fund (disaster relief) and reserve fund. Under the medicare system, a member may see a qualified doctor and the expenses will be split equally between the society and the member. In the case of death of a member the family gets 1,000 taka, for which the member has to contribute an annual due of ten taka to the life insurance fund. School supplies are free to the children of members. To promote technical education, the society pays 50 per cent of the educational expenses of members' children who are undertaking a technical educational programme. The idea of the loss fund was prompted by the cooperative

farming loss in 1968, to guard against future financial losses. At the moment tube-well services are rated. The sinking fund under the heading of tube-well purchase fund will eventually buy off the tube-well.

On the asset side, the buildings and roadside shops (rented out to members) are worth 800,000 taka. There is a fine village hall for meetings and recreational purposes. There is a television set on which the villagers watch various programmes. A women's day for TV watching has also been fixed to encourage them to take greater interest in the external world.

Weekly meetings are the focal point of the society. The attendance rate at weekly meetings is 90 to 100 per cent. There is a compulsory reward and punishment system that goes with it. Out of the 453 members, 75 are women. As the cooperative has been thrown open to all villagers, middle and rich farmers have also joined, *but the leadership and the majority belong clearly to the workers, the landless and the land-poor peasants*. In the weekly meetings, all matters are discussed and 70 to 80 per cent of the members take part. Accountability to members is extremely high. It was the keynote when Yasin started and has been perfected over the years.

With the launching of the TVD Programme, Deeder has further widened its activities. Items that currently preoccupy the society are rural electrification and sanitation. All houses are to be electrified. Fifty water-seal latrines have been ordered, and 26 have already been supplied. One hundred per cent school attendance of members' children is insisted upon. An adult education programme has been very successful, and 95 per cent can now sign their names. No personal hygiene programme has been thought about yet—this is still a 'sensitive' area. Family planning work is 'weak'—50 per cent of target has been achieved. In health, preventive measures are stressed.

Another idea being discussed is to try cooperative farming again. The expressed desire is to raise cooperatively an aus crop on leased land that otherwise grows aman and boro, thus moving into a three-crop cycle. As individuals, the peasants are reluctant to undertake the task and the risk involved in intensive triple cropping.

The contrast between Deeder, which started and flourished as an organization of the poor, and the usual rich-peasant or middle-peasant dominated cooperative in Comilla, contains broader lessons for evolving a strategy for rural development.

The stage by stage evolution of Deeder, its successes and failures, its institutions, processes and procedures are all lessons for the other TVD villages. In fact, while learning from Deeder's experience in other areas the new TVD villages seem to be avoiding excessive dependence on external resources, which was a feature of Deeder at some stages of its development. While the loans were promptly repaid and the basic self-reliance philosophy did not suffer, the possibility of even obtaining a large quantum of assistance for the more extensive TVD Programme would have to be ruled out.

Deeder also shows that if an organization is built up on the strength of the poor, they can successfully maintain their control if the more affluent are admitted at a later stage. The role of the active weekly forum provides the key to keeping the organization both democratic and non-bureaucratic.

Deeder leaders told us that it is hoped, during the next two to three years, that all villagers will be in the cooperative with livelihood, employment and skills ensured to all. The effect of the inclusion of the rich in the

cooperative on the fundamental contradiction in the mode of production needs, however, to be examined. If this is giving an illusion of harmony it may inhibit the development of social consciousness among the poor, contributing thereby to continued exploitation through the still existing dependency relationships in the economic base.

3 The Rural Reconstruction Project—Thailand

The TRRM

The Thai Rural Reconstruction Movement (TRRM) is a private foundation which has initiated the most comprehensive rural development project in Thailand. It is part of an international family of organizations, linked through the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), which are experimenting with a holistic approach to rural development in various countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The root of the idea lies in the experience of the founder, Dr James Yen, in mass education projects in China prior to 1949.[1]

The movement is based on the philosophical premise that 'the paramount need of the peasant people is not relief but release—release of their own potentials for individual growth, economic productivity, and social and political responsibility'. While the means for implementing the philosophy is rural reconstruction, the goal has been defined as 'human reconstruction'. To meet the broad goals the movement, through experience, has evolved a 'four-fold' programme:

1. *Livelihood*, increasing the income of the peasants through growth in crop and animal productivity and subsidiary occupations.
2. *Health and sanitation*, dealing with curative and preventive medicine, family planning, cleanliness and environmental sanitation.
3. *Education*, ranging from pre-school age children's nurseries to adult functional literacy and vocational training.
4. *Self-government*, with programmes encouraging the farmers to run democratically their own groups (youth, women) and organizations (credit union, buying club) and creating forums (village committee) to discuss issues which affect the village collectively.

The distinctiveness of the method of work, which is carried out by young men and women (rural workers) who live in complete integration with the village they serve, is embodied in the motto: 'Go to the people. Live among them. Love them. Serve them. Plan with them. Start with what they know. Build on what they have. Not piecemeal but integrated approach. Not show case but pattern . . . Mass education through mass participation. Learn by doing. And teach by showing.'

In Thailand the TRRM has chosen the district of Sankhaburi, in the province of Chainat, which is situated in the rice-producing central plains, for intensive work. About 15 centres have been established to cover over 20 villages with the four-fold activities of the movement. A field office in Chainat provides technical

and administrative support to the workers living in the village centres.

The setting and its historical roots

The central plains occupy a very important place in the Thai economy because they produce rice, the major commodity in this agriculture-based country and the principal earner of foreign exchange for over 100 years. With the active encouragement of the state for the production and export of rice, the entire lowland area, which was sparsely populated until the middle of the nineteenth century, has been settled, has prospered and has provided Thailand with a stable source of capital accumulation.[2]

The land was settled in relation to the communications network, waterways and roads, with the more accessible areas being settled first. As long as uncultivated land was available, a family could clear as much of the light jungle as it could manage (usually 40 to 60 rai = 16 to 24 acres) with a minimum of formalities. Lacking any suitable mechanization technology for rice, a family could not cultivate much larger areas of this labour-intensive crop and, though there were some exceptions, large estates based on hired labour were generally not possible due to the availability of abundant free land. These factors created a society which, though by no means rich (due to low and stagnant yields), was self-sufficient, mutually cooperative and egalitarian, both economically and socially.

By the 1930s, however, the land frontier had closed, beginning a gradual process of subdivision by inheritance. The increasing influence of the urbanization process in the post-war period, combined with the introduction of new technology—new seeds, fertilizers, machinery, irrigation, etc.—created further perturbation in the socio-economic pattern. As a result, the whole region is undergoing a process of 'modernization' which is changing the lifestyles, habits, values and socio-economic relations in the area.

Effect of the movement on village structure

During this period, total production has greatly increased (yields have increased between 50 and 100 per cent in 25 years) and the infrastructure (roads, electricity, markets, telecommunications, transportation, education) has been considerably improved. Perhaps inevitably, though, the benefits of growth have been unequally distributed and the once homogeneous population is becoming polarized. The percentage of landless and land-poor farmers is increasing, while others have become rich through incomes derived from agricultural, agriculture-based (money lending, rice mills, rice marketing) and non-agricultural activities. Both income and wealth are becoming more concentrated.[3]

The villages have been affected to different extents by the change process, with the worst fragmentation and polarization taking place in the more accessible, older villages.[4] These are (a) more densely populated, (b) have less land per capita, (c) have more landholding and income inequality and more land sale-purchase activity, (d) have a more diverse (i.e. non-agriculture) occupational pattern, and (e) are less integrated as a community due to greater external linkages. This pattern is, however, rapidly spreading to the interior villages and, unless some unexpected change takes place, they may be expected to follow the path traversed by the more accessible villages.

In absolute terms, the per capita availability of land is still much higher than in India and

Bangladesh. Less than one-third of the farmers own or operate less than six acres of land, except in very densely populated villages where the proportion rises to 60 per cent. At the other end of the scale, hardly 5 per cent have over 18 acres of land. The bulk of the farmers, 50 to 70 per cent, own between 6 and 18 acres and thus constitute the solid majority of the village. In relative terms, in contrast to Sultanpur (see the chapter on India) where the top 15 per cent own 70 per cent of the land, in the central plains the top 20 per cent own 34 per cent of the land* while the bottom 20 per cent own 8 per cent.[5] The totally landless, who neither own nor operate any holding and depend solely on wage labour earnings, still constitute a negligible percentage in most villages.

The process of polarization has been counteracted to an extent by increasing productivity and employment opportunities both within the village (second crop due to irrigation) and outside. As a result, the majority (perhaps 90 per cent) of the farmers have gradually improved their standard of living, while a minority has remained more or less stagnant in income terms and deteriorated in terms of assets. Income differentials are rarely reflected in consumption of rice, which is generally adequate; it is the consumption of fish and particularly of meat which varies widely.[6] Housing and consumer durables provide visible evidence of inequality.

Economic inequalities have not yet, however, created unbridgeable social barriers and rigidities. Often, close relatives belong to quite different income categories, so that kinship links blur class distinctions. Recently, though, there appears to have been an increasing tendency for marriage links to become polarized into rich-rich and poor-poor alliances.

Economic arrangements in the village

The bulk of the population, particularly the middle category who constitute the majority, operate family farms which may exchange or hire labour only during peak seasons. The landless and the land-poor find employment on larger farms, but more often lease land either by cash payment or as share-croppers. With increasing competition for land, the share of the owner has tended to increase from one-third to almost one-half, with the tenant bearing the entire expenditure. Only a few of the largest farmers (who often have other occupations too, e.g. trade, rice-mill operation) lease out land regularly. By and large, this mode of exploitation is weak and affects a very small percentage of the population—who are, however, the poorest.

Indebtedness is fairly common, with around 50 per cent of the households borrowing money.[7] Where bank lending (Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives) is minor, relatives and neighbours are the major source of credit and the rate of interest is moderate to nil. Traders and moneylenders seem to be quantitatively a minor source of credit, but their clients are usually the poorest, who consequently pay the highest rates of interest. It is not unusual for a borrower who is unable to repay to lose his land and perhaps become a tenant of the moneylender in his own former land.[8] In the villages with the greatest disparity, where the poor have to borrow rice to survive through the season, rates of interest up to 20 per cent per month have been recorded. While on the overall economic scene moneylending is a minor source of exploitation, the incidence of usury and other means of exploitation, be-

*In contrast to data for the whole country, where the top 10 per cent own 34 per cent of the land.

ing concentrated on the poorest strata, greatly magnifies its social impact.

Marketing arrangements are the greatest source of exploitation and here again, while all the producers are affected, the impact is regressive, with the poor, due to their low holding and bargaining power, selling first and getting the lowest price. The more advanced villages have local traders, but the interior villages are covered by traders from nearby urban areas. In either case, the paddy is picked up by the trader in his own transport either from the farm or the home of the farmer. The negotiated price is always lower than the prices quoted on the radio (which are known to all farmers) and lower than the minimum price guaranteed by the government in recent times.* While some medium farmers and all the larger farmers store a major part of their paddy for some months and sell it when the prices are higher, the poor, because of immediate need for cash both for consumption and debt repayment, sell at harvest time, losing 200 to 300 baht (20 baht = 1 US dollar) per ton on a single transaction. The entire operation is so smoothly organized, and the vertical linkages are so tightly knit, that even the largest of farmers, though they may grumble about the price, are diffident about a feasible alternative.

Rice, as the major product, attracts the most attention in a study of marketing arrangements. However, the problem is even worse in marketing pigs, poultry and cattle, and the middlemen's margins make the entire animal production operation uneconomical. This again has the greatest impact on the poor, who, relatively, may benefit the most by utilizing their surplus labour on these non-land-based subsidiary activities.

Social situation

In marked contrast to the Indian subcontinent, women in Thailand are socially and economically equal to men and participate fully in labour and decision making. Inheritance laws and other traditions have created the present social environment, which has an impact on every facet of village life.

The young seem to have sufficient room to change with the times within the family and social structure, and do not show signs of rebelliousness. Education and contact with the outside world are widening their horizons and changing their tastes and aspirations without, as yet, alienating them from normal farm work. Illiteracy is less than 20 per cent. The majority of the population have had four years of education, with the younger generation approaching seven years. Those who finish secondary education or go to technical schools do not return to the village, but find job opportunities elsewhere.

To an outsider, obvious manifestations of inequality, like clothes and appearance, are not noticeable and social interaction between

*We are not discussing in this partial analysis the macro-economic question of what should be the 'correct' price of rice to (a) encourage maximum production, (b) permit accumulation and investment by the rice farmers, and (c) permit national accumulation by the transfer of surpluses from the central plains to (i) urban and (ii) less developed and far poorer regions, e.g. the north-east, to generate industrial growth and/or reduce disparities, and the eventual reconciliation of the various policy objectives. The further issue of utilization of surpluses locally to create a decentralized industrial structure instead of concentrating in the single metropolitan-industrial complex of Bangkok is also beyond the scope of this study. The focus here is on inequitous drainage of surpluses from the village into the hands of middlemen, through seasonal price fluctuations and manipulations in volume-weight differentials, grading, processing charges, etc. These problems have been successfully tackled through cooperative marketing arrangements by a number of countries in the region, e.g. South Korea.

the known rich and the known poor do not reveal antagonisms which are obvious on the Indian subcontinent.

Subjective perceptions

Members of the team visited several villages where the TRRM has established centres, many of them repeatedly over a period of one year. The dialogues with the farmers of these villages (both participants and non-participants in TRRM activities) were supplemented by more intensive discussions with people in the village of Don Pradu, an interior village in the subdistrict (Tambon) Dong Khon, located about 4½ miles from the district headquarters. Group and individual interviews covered farmers from different economic strata, the young and the old, men and women.

Don Pradu has 145 families and a population of about 1,000. The total cultivated area is over 5,000 rai (2,000 acres) with land distribution similar to the pattern described earlier. The village is about 50 years old. Don Pradu has only recently (five years ago) acquired an all-weather road and has just been reached by irrigation. Land consolidation and levelling will be undertaken shortly. Paddy yields are around 10 cwt. per rai, and outside merchants come and purchase the paddy. A rice mill has recently been installed by a middle farmer.

The feeling of improvement in living standards is generally shared, and even the poorest (landless wage labourers) seem to feel they are better off. It is known that some families in the village have recently become much richer than the others, but this has not yet created social distances between them and the others in the community, the bulk of whom are in the middle category. Local political power and influence are also diffused in the middle group, with appreciation of such qualities as 'honesty', 'selflessness' and 'hard work'.

While the village is still socially integrated, the traditional cooperative work arrangements have gradually broken down. Elders recall how in earlier times they used to work on each other's land as the need arose, and how the system gave way to the more exact accounting of labour exchange and then to wage payment. Increasing inequality has made the previous arrangements impractical in a wider social group and the circle of exchange is increasingly narrowing down to close relatives with approximately equal landholdings. Disparities are fostering more individualistic values and the path to prosperity is seen to be linked more to individual initiative, though without as yet a feeling of extreme mutual competition for work and resources.

Individualism has not led to any strong antagonisms and in a number of special activities, e.g. building a temple, the whole village has been able to cooperate, with each contributing according to ability. The people have readily cooperated with the secular activities promoted by the TRRM like building a road, a nursery and a newspaper reading shed.

The poor have little complaint about wages and are not as a group too perturbed about moneylending, though the rates of interest are thought to be high. It is an issue on which they would readily unite if the situation could be mitigated. Share-cropping arrangements have been stable and are generally acceptable. The poor do not think of themselves as a separate group which has certain exclusive problems.

Marketing arrangements, i.e. prices, are universally perceived as exploitative, with varying degrees of understanding of the exact nature of the exploitation. While some accept it as the natural order of things and show little dissatisfaction, others are more anxious to explore ways of combating the system, though at the moment they are overwhelmed by its

complexity. Isolation from other villages is one cause of the diffidence.

The young are educated, aware of national happenings and alert to changes in the external world. With the best educated leaving the village, the youth as a group does not show much interest in or influence on local affairs and is not a source of new leadership as in Bangladesh.

Assessment of the present situation

The situation described in the preceding sections is one of rapid change, in which technology is dissolving the traditional social structures and is integrating the rural areas into the urban-centred economy.

The land-surplus, labour-short, low-technology, egalitarian village economy, which sold some surplus rice in return for consumer goods, has disappeared. The village is dependent on the urban areas for modern inputs, machines and a range of consumer goods, including durables. The emphasis has shifted to increasing both land and labour productivity and inevitably, due to initial asset advantage or greater initiative, some have moved faster than others. The existing cross-section of villages, in different stages of modernization, depicts both the past and the possible future.

The overall picture is one of increased prosperity, but with some dark spots and many danger signs. The effects of increased socio-economic inequality are mitigated only by the still favourable resource/man ratio, which will deteriorate over the next generation. Social disintegration has lagged behind economic inequality, but many features of cooperative efforts have disappeared. Even the better utilization of land and water resources, which at the moment are not fully and intensively utilized, will require cooperative efforts.

Exploitation through labour and moneylending is minor, though its impact is felt by the poorer strata. The principal mode of exploitation is by outsiders through the marketing mechanism. To combat this requires action by the entire village. In the still relatively homogeneous society, contradictions among the people are not yet sharp. Even the poorest show little cleavage from the rest, because the group is small, the exploitation is relatively mild and the subjective feeling does not call for 'delinkage'. The poor will, however, require special attention to tackle their unique problems.

At the other end of the spectrum are the few who have acquired considerable wealth in recent times. Starting with an initial asset advantage, they have accelerated the process by interchangeable investments in more land, tractors (for hire), moneylending, trade and services. Their economic power is slowly being translated into political influence and the nexus between these two could accentuate the process of extreme polarization, while government policies seek to reduce disparities. There is evidence that while urban inequalities in Thailand are decreasing, rural inequalities are increasing.[9]

There are no signs that the process of polarization which the region is undergoing will be halted or reversed in the near future. The relatively mild and non-antagonistic contradictions which characterize the rural areas will inevitably sharpen and mature, with quantitative changes accelerating under the influence of external conditions. However, the contradictions within the village are secondary to the fundamental contradiction of today, i.e. the urban-rural relationship which mainly operates through the rice-marketing mechanism. The primary task of development is the resolution of this contradiction.

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The TRRM project and the changing rural scene

It is against this background of structural transformation in the rural area that the TRRM launched its programme of comprehensive rural development almost a decade ago. Examination of its impact may seek answers to such questions as:

1. Have the TRRM's activities accelerated the process that has been unfolding in the area?
2. Has the TRRM counteracted any of the negative features of the change process, e.g. increasing disparity or erosion of co-operative values?
3. Who has benefited from the TRRM programmes?

Many more questions may be asked. The TRRM's intervention in an ongoing, powerfully propelled, change process is an extremely valuable probing which could provide insights into what modifications of the general process are possible and ideally how, under the given set of socio-economic conditions, the development process can be better harnessed to avoid the negative fall-outs.

The rural worker

The spearhead of the TRRM's activity is the rural worker. The major credit for the success of the programme is attributable to the creation of this one institution, and differences in the centres can be traced to the strengths and weaknesses of the rural worker, his commitment, method of operation and integration with the community.

The programmes

The major visible impact of the TRRM's activities so far has been through the *livelihood* programme, which has greatly quickened the pace of the adoption of new crop technology through its extension efforts. In the absence of an effective government network, the TRRM worker has become the agent through whom new ideas and technology enter the village and, due to his constant persuasion, spread. The introduction of new crops has also been hastened. While the productivity has increased generally, its benefits have inevitably been distributed in proportion to the land holding.

Animal production programmes (cattle fattening, swine raising, ducks, fish, poultry) have, however, been of more direct benefit to the poor. When backed up by necessary bank credit, these have improved their income and living conditions and reduced their dependence on the moneylenders. The absence of proper marketing arrangements, however, is hampering the programme.

Programmes of *health* and *education* have been generally useful and successful. While improving the quality of the environment and raising the level of awareness of the people, these non-controversial activities have helped to bring the workers closer to all the families in the village who participate in one activity or the other.

Activities which have been most difficult to promote, but which have the greatest potential, are in the area of *self-government*. Credit union brings together people, mainly the poor, to pool their small, regular savings for mutual assistance in times of need, reducing their dependence on the moneylenders. The buying club on the other hand, by helping the people to pool their purchasing power for agricultural inputs and consumption requirements, improves their bargaining strength and increases savings. Both these organizations interest the poor more than they do the rich; in fact, it is in these activities that a certain cleavage be-

comes evident and, to the extent that the interests of the moneylenders and traders are affected, opposition of varying degrees is faced.

Apart from the functional services that these organizations provide, they serve as excellent forums for (a) promoting democratic discussions on concrete problems, (b) creating cooperative spirit and socially owned assets, (c) generating experience in overall management and day-to-day running of enterprises (the buying club shop, including the accounts, is handled by the members in turn), and (d) creating a broad-based leadership pool which operates through consensus.

It is in this area that the unevenness of performance of the various centres is most marked. There are a number of places where the credit unions and buying clubs have stagnated, declined in membership or even closed down, often due to open or subtle opposition of the vested interests. The difficulty of promoting the self-government programmes and the ease with which the other programmes of the TRRM are implemented tends to create a natural imbalance, with a temptation to concentrate on programmes where the response is more spontaneous. While it is essential to respond to the felt needs of the people and to build up mutual confidence (particularly in the initial stages), lack of significant progress in the more difficult areas increases the risk of the entire programme stagnating. Development of these organizations is particularly important, as it is precisely the values and experience created by these programmes which would most effectively counteract the negative aspects of technological change and create the subjective and objective conditions necessary for moving to higher stages of social organization. It may provide the momentum for a self-sustained movement towards the TRRM's goal of 'human reconstruction'.

The ultimate goal is too remote and abstract to be a practical guide to field personnel. Intermediate goals are needed at various stages of development, in the absence of which the activities become goals in themselves (e.g. the number of swine dispersed or sanitary toilets installed), confusing means with ends. The programme could then degenerate into a mechanical pattern of unrelated activities.

One danger signal already evident is the inability of the movement to withdraw its worker from a village even after seven to eight years of hard work. The activities which have so far been undertaken, though individually beneficial, have not created a strong community organization with a local leadership cadre which can replace the worker. In the absence of more complex and challenging tasks created by a higher stage of social organization, the worker continues to promote activities which may be useful but are now not commensurate with either the worker's experience or the community's capabilities. It may even be questioned whether the continued presence of the worker is not making the village complacent and less self-reliant.

Beyond the mild confrontation with exploitation through moneylending and trading is the major problem of marketing. Hitherto the TRRM has not touched this area, which could have brought within its folds a number of farmers who are today only marginally involved. Even subjectively, this is one issue which seems to touch and unite the entire village and can be utilized to promote collective action, which could then lead to other programmes.

In sum, the TRRM has made a substantial impact on the life of the villages it has covered. The productivity has increased and the process of modernization has accelerated. The poor have derived some benefits, particularly through animal production programmes. The

organization has established close rapport with the village through its activities in education and health and has partly translated this confidence into self-managed forums which are promoting unity and facing certain basic issues. A more universal involvement is inhibited by the lack of a programme to tackle the fundamental contradiction—marketing.

The effectiveness of the project, as the founders themselves have noted, will be established when it becomes a 'pattern that spreads rather than a show case', which can only stagnate. The movement needs to multiply its coverage in the area greatly, and for that it must (a) generate its own resources by actively participating in the economic activities of the region, and (b) create local cadres who can spread the movement.

Design of a future programme

The experience gathered by the TRRM so far has established the validity of the approach under conditions obtaining in the central plains, if not for a wider area. A broad programme dealing with both the economic and non-economic aspects of village life initiated through the medium of a non-bureaucratic cadre evokes an active response from the people. Over a period of time, with growing confidence in each other and in the rural worker based on actual work experience, more and more complex tasks are undertaken and group working in a more formal sense becomes possible. The future task is to encourage this process to take its natural course, both by widening the base of participation and by institutionalization, which would give it form and permanence.

The TRRM is essentially building on values which were in existence in the village society not so long ago and, though they are now in disuse, the overall socio-economic situation in the village is as yet not so full of sharp contradictions as to make the values meaningless to the people. By providing new, relevant, material rationale for their revival, the TRRM is indeed counteracting one of the major negative effects of the purely technology-oriented change process.

In fact, the TRRM in its normal process of review and evaluation has already started thinking of new activities appropriate to this stage of the project. The focus of their efforts in this phase appears to be three related areas:

1. Projects to improve the income and reduce the indebtedness of the poorest strata, e.g. processing of palm sugar and its proper marketing, intensification of animal production, including marketing arrangements.
2. Consolidation of the credit unions and buying clubs into a single body with a combined managing committee, which in time would be the nucleus of a 'village committee', a democratic deliberation-cum-decision body of the community.
3. Federation of the village organizations (credit union and buying club) to undertake (a) storage, (b) processing and (c) marketing of paddy.

Detailed project proposals have been drawn up for each one of these activities, an examination of which clearly reveals the greater complexity—technical, organizational, financial—of the efforts in this advanced stage. The projects have been drawn up in consultation with the people and correspond to the state of the material base and awareness which has been created by the previous work.

The special projects for the poor are directly tackling the issue of increasing disparity and are expected to make them economically and

psychologically more independent and self-confident, thus making their participation in other activities more significant.

The most ambitious project deals with paddy marketing. It proposes the establishment of storage barns at the village level, trucks for transporting the paddy and a modern rice mill for processing. It clearly brings out the benefits which will accrue to (a) the individual, in terms of a better price, expected to be of the order of 200 baht per ton extra, and (b) the cooperative, in terms of 'profit', which will build up a collective fund. The favourable economics of the project would reinforce the unifying effect it would have, not only within the villages but also between the villages. The resistance that the project may have to face could itself help to raise the consciousness of the participants by making them aware of their common interests. Conditions would then be ripe for the emergence of constructive leadership.

Obtaining a better price for the paddy will benefit the entire community, with the poor benefiting most in relation to the existing situation as described previously. The creation of a collective fund adds a completely new dimension to the project, with many new—and perhaps hitherto unthought of—possibilities. It is in the process of deciding how to use the fund that creative new ideas will emerge and positive values will be strengthened, as in the case of the Bangladesh project. Use of a part of the fund for TRRM-type educational activities (which is envisaged) will help the movement to spread and become self-reliant.

Workers' initial discussions with the people have evoked an enthusiastic response and many non-members have indicated a wish to join the organization. The response is a confirmation of the correctness of (a) the issue and (b) the timing of the new project. Eventually, even villages not covered by the TRRM may wish to join, helping to spread the entire movement rapidly.

The actual organization of the marketing and processing activities, and possibly many more activities which could follow from the utilization of the collective fund, will give management experience to the people. It may also induce the educated youth, who today leave the villages, to come back or stay back to handle the more challenging new tasks. From this new pool of skills and experience a local cadre may emerge which would permit the TRRM to withdraw its worker to spread the movement in other areas, solving the vexing problem of multiplication.

It is apparent that the TRRM is entering a crucial and decisive stage in its operations. Going beyond the essential tasks embodied in the Livelihood, Health and Education programmes, it has to concentrate on organizational tasks implicit in the self-government programme. And within this effort it has quickly to consolidate the credit unions and buying clubs, which are base organizations, into the larger, more universal and vastly more complex task of marketing, which holds the key to the higher goals which the TRRM has set for itself.

Lastly, it has been observed that 'Thailand has in her to become one of the most egalitarian societies in Asia'.[10] Recently, there have even been editorial exhortations to establish a 'National Foundation for Rural Development' (*Bangkok Post*, 25 August 1976). In any effort of this nature, the experience gathered by the TRRM—its philosophy, approach, detailed methodology and activity sequencing—would be of immense value, provided of course that the organization carries the approach through to its logical conclusion, creating a true people's movement.

Part Two

Project Design and Evaluation

4 Principles of Project Design and Evaluation

The setting

We have looked at three concrete cases of village political economy in three different parts of Asia. The investigations reveal important differences in the stages of evolution of the respective social and economic structures and also show different specific historical settings for each of the concrete cases.

The pressure of population and the law of inheritance have brought the man/land ratio in Bangladesh to a critical stage. In the Comilla area, which has been specifically studied, this has virtually eliminated ownership of large quantities of land. It has also made the distribution of land ownership or land holding for farming purposes relatively less skewed.

In the central region of Thailand and in Uttar Pradesh in India the average man/land ratio is larger. But there is considerable difference between the two in the degree of skewness in land distribution: polarization is very much sharper in the Indian than in the Thai situation studied.

Such differences by themselves have affected the respective social settings in the three situations. Further differentiating factors have been (a) the relatively greater opportunity for non-farming occupations both within and outside the village in Thailand, (b) the caste in India, and (c) the liberating effects of the independence war in Bangladesh upon the minds of the youth particularly. The nature of external interventions in the villages has also been different: Bangladesh records the longest history of governmental, semi-governmental and autonomous interventions; the TRRM in Thailand records an autonomous effort at rural development; and the Indian case represents intervention of the market variety by way of supply of modern agricultural inputs.

These differences are reflected in the modes of production in the respective situations. Sultanpur in India, with its sharper polarization and dominance of the market forces, has entered into the era of capitalist farming. In Bangladesh, with the removal of the feudal landlords at the time of partition of the subcontinent in 1947, the village social structure has become somewhat less polarized. In Thailand, the process of polarization has not advanced far enough in the first instance in the area studied.

Consciousness about exploitation remains high in Bangladesh and active interventions of various types on behalf of the relatively underprivileged are more pronounced. In the Thailand villages under investigation such consciousness is hardly discernible among the poor, who are numerically very small, and intervention by the TRRM is more concerned with raising the incomes of the peasantry as a whole rather than with the relative status of the poor in the village. And in Sultanpur, in India, things are still left by and large to a freer interplay of local forces, with the Jatavs united for physical protection from the Jats but not for economic and political purposes.

Common features

Such differences in concrete conditions rule out the validity of characterizing the mode of production and social relations in the Asian countryside as one homogeneous category. Nevertheless, the cases studied do reveal certain common features of a more fundamental nature, from which certain hypotheses may be derived for further investigation and social policy.

Internal spread. Typically, the Asian village does not seem to constitute a homogeneous economic and social entity. The internal diversity, while its extent varies, is palpable. Some people in the village are rich by the average village standard, and enjoy both social status

and political power in the village. Others are considerably poorer, living a life of frustrating toil and economic insecurity that have visibly degraded their general status in the society. A middle range of tolerable but unspectacular life also exists.

This spread of status is derived basically from the distribution of land, but access to other strategic resources, such as water and fertilizer, and to credit, storage and a market are also important determinants. There is an interdependence between the two, and it is the richer farmers who by and large have the greater access to the latter privileges; this, in turn, makes them even richer and enables them to acquire more land over time.

Dependency. Between those who are thus privileged and the poorer peasantry who are not, social relations of a dominant/dependent character have developed. While economic fortunes are interdependent insofar as the rich need the poor to work for them, the relationship is highly asymmetrical: the rich have the power to bring about a crisis of very *immediate* survival for the poor by denying or withholding employment, and by the use of the assets, inputs and services that they possess or control, and not vice versa. Such asymmetrical dependency forms in the economic base—e.g. bonded and semi-bonded labour, sharecropping by the landless peasant on the rich farmer's land, moneylending by the rich farmer to the poor for immediate subsistence or for the purchase of vital farming input, control of marketing by the rich farmer or trader with the poor peasant having no staying power to bargain for better prices—have in turn contributed to the creation of dependency attitudes among the poor peasantry vis-à-vis the rich. Thus the poor are inhibited from taking economic, social and political initiatives for improving their lives, and have tended to become non-innovative, non-problem-solving and non-experimental. Such dependency attitudes in the superstructure help all the more to stabilize and strengthen the dependency character of the economic base, and thereby contribute to the development of a vicious circle of mutually reinforcing objective and subjective dependency relationships.

These processes are reinforced by differential access to education, which is a major avenue for acquiring skills as well as social status. This is what has happened to the Jatavs in Sultanpur in India vis-à-vis the Jats, to the share-cropper and wage-labourer in Comilla in Bangladesh, to the whole village vis-à-vis the trader in the TRRM area in Thailand, and to the poor to small peasantry vis-à-vis the moneylending rich farmer everywhere.

Exploitation and expropriation. Such asymmetrical dependency relationships enable the dominant to dictate the terms of the relationship to the dependent and through this to exploit them. In broad terms, exploitation may be taken to mean appropriation of a part of the product of another's labour by exercising social, political or economic bargaining power, rather than sharing the product by agreement as to what constitutes a fair share in the product for each. There may be little disagreement that the share-cropper who has to surrender 50 per cent of his product to the landlord is exploited; so are the poor peasants who are charged a 'usurious' interest rate by the moneylender; and the poor and small peasantry who are selling their harvest to the trader at a price very much below what the consumer pays because they can neither spare their harvest nor wait for the cash.

While the degree of such exploitation varies from one area to another, according to the strengths of the respective dependency relationships, the fact of such exploitation appears

to be a central feature of the general pattern in the situations investigated.

Side by side with exploitation in the sense of actually appropriating the product of somebody else's labour, other forms of economic expropriation—such as the monopolization of scarce external resources (e.g. water, fertilizer and credit) by exercising one's social and political power without submitting to a consensus as to how these should be distributed, and the influencing of court decisions on land rights, etc. again by virtue of one's contacts and political power—are also part of the general pattern.

Such exploitation and expropriation together constitute polarizing processes in the village society, by which the rich tend to get richer and the small and poor tend to get smaller and poorer.

Contradictions. Such a polarizing process constitutes a *major contradiction*—i.e. a relationship where interests are opposed to each other—in a village society. Many other contradictions are also observed in the village society. There is, for example, contradiction among the village rich themselves, who compete with each other for such facilities as the location of economic infrastructure, e.g. roads and irrigation works, the location of the power pump, the supply of fertilizer and pesticides, external credit, the privilege of getting one's loan defaults ignored by the authorities, the privilege of getting court cases in one's favour, etc.; and to achieve all these, they compete with each other for the favour of the bureaucracy, the law and order machinery, and linkages with political power at higher levels. There is also contradiction between men and women, varying in degree in accordance with the sex distribution of control over economic assets and production skills; this contradiction is visibly more pronounced in the Indian subcontinent than in Thailand, and manifests itself in humiliating constraints on the autonomy of choice in many spheres of the women's lives. Contradictions exist too between the young and the old, when the former are dependent on the latter for a living and for education, and are required to accept social relations—i.e. rights and privileges—dictated by the latter.

Our case studies reveal that there is disunity also among the poor in the village. It is important to note that, while suffering together from the overall social relations in the village, the poor do not exhibit any spontaneous tendency to look towards each other for class solidarity. They do not naturally gather to deliberate about the deprivation in their lives and their degrading social status, or to explore what they can do together to improve their lives and to provide collective staying power to individuals amongst themselves under specific conditions of extreme distress. On the contrary, the spontaneous tendency seems to be either to go it alone or to lean for advice and relief on the very people who are in fact exploiting them, and to compete with each other for land-lease, wage-employment, etc.

A probing on the consciousness of the poor reveals that, as a rule, the value of cooperation among them is not questioned in principle; misgivings seem to exist in their minds as to the feasibility of such cooperation, and most of them would rather wait for concrete demonstration of success before agreeing to embark on cooperative ventures with their fellow sufferers.

Antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions. The existence of many such contradictions is a fundamental fact of village life in Asia, as revealed by the three case studies. Some of these contradictions are non-antagonistic, in the sense that possibilities exist for their resolution through such methods as

cooperation, reasoning, etc. The initial contradictions between the poor in Deeder in Bangladesh, who subsequently entered into a cooperative venture and significantly resolved these contradictions, were of the non-antagonistic nature.

Other contradictions are antagonistic, in the sense that they constitute a conflict of interest between two classes of people whose state of resolution is determined fundamentally by the balance of political power between them. Thus, for example, the share-cropper cannot wrest a larger share of his harvest for himself unless he can muster political strength in his favour; nor can oppression by the moneylender be reduced without increasing the political strength of the small and poor peasantry. The same applies to the oppression of women by men, and of the youth by the old, liberation from which requires the respective oppressed groups to unite and assert themselves as a political force.

The fundamental contradiction. At any point in time, a village society exhibits a number of antagonistic as well as non-antagonistic contradictions generated by the mode of production. Among the antagonistic contradictions one contradiction, or a closely related set, may emerge as dominant, in the sense that those with the requisite economic and political power find in this the best way to enrich themselves further at the expense of others. This, then, becomes the principal means through which the absolute or relative poverty of those lacking in such power is accentuated; it is called the fundamental contradiction in the mode of production.

In Sultanpur in India, for example, the fundamental contradiction is the relationship between the Jats and the Jatavs; in Comilla in Bangladesh it is the relationship between the rich peasants-cum-moneylenders and the small and poor peasantry. In the KRRM area in Thailand the internal contradictions do not appear to be sharp enough, and the fundamental contradiction may instead be identified as the relationship between the peasantry as a whole and the rice traders.

Among the various contradictions in the society, those that affect large sections of the population are obviously of primary importance. Such a contradiction may be said to have sharpened when the degree of exploitation traceable to this contradiction is high, and the contradiction is perceived by those affected as a major determinant of their lives.

When the fundamental contradiction has sharpened within a village, the economic, social and political institutions therein will have adjusted to the workings of this contradiction. Some will develop to strengthen the process of exploitation through the fundamental contradiction. Thus, for example, when usurious moneylending leading to appropriation of the debtor's land becomes the fundamental contradiction, the moneylender uses his political power to develop legal and social conventions that protect him more than the debtor and facilitate the ultimate transfer of the land. This is again the situation in Bangladesh, whereas in the villages investigated in Thailand, land transfer through the moneylending process has not been reported as significant and social conventions still exist for writing off small debts of a poor peasant unable to repay.

Other institutions develop to bestow further powers on the dominant class in the fundamental contradiction: for example, the panchayats in India, through which political power has been concentrated further in the hands of the rich, and the cooperative and relief committees in Bangladesh, which are captured by the already dominant class who find them useful as tools of further exploitation and appro-

priation of privileges. Each such institution thereby represents further contradictions, dividing the society further around the privileges that these institutions bestow.

Social alliances and economic cooperations are also formed around the fundamental contradiction and the supporting institutions: the exploited themselves adjust their lives in an effort to make the best out of the oppressive economic base, and develop relations with the oppressors and between themselves that are rationalizable in terms of the dynamics of this base; the exploiters work out institutions and rules for competing with each other within a framework of overall class solidarity.

Contradiction tree. Such institutions and social relationships in turn contain their own contradictions, some antagonistic and some non-antagonistic. Government agencies tend to work in close collaboration with the principal exploiters in the village because of the latter's economic and social status, and may stand thereby in antagonistic contradiction with the exploited. Competition for shares of the privileges and power that belong to them as a class constitutes a non-antagonistic contradiction among the exploiters. In this way, a 'contradiction tree', as it were, is generated with the fundamental contradiction as its root.

However, not all the contradictions observed in a village at any given stage of its evolution would have been generated by the fundamental contradiction of the time. The generation of a contradiction tree from a fundamental contradiction takes its own time, during which the latter is in the process of sharpening. There would, therefore, always be some contradictions, with their respective roots in economic bases developed over earlier historical phases (e.g. the caste in India). Furthermore, secondary economic activities (e.g. fishing) may also be present more or less independently of the principal mode of production in the village, and these will have their own contradictions.

It is important to note, however, that the fundamental contradiction in a village, if it has really sharpened, should be expected to explain and substantially influence a significant number of other contradictions in the society, so as to stand out as a major phenomenon in the political economy of the day.

Strategy

Having discussed the setting of the political economy of the Asian village in broad terms in the light of the theory of contradictions and our concrete observations in the field, we shall now discuss the general principles that may govern the design of village development projects. The principles we propose, similarly, have been derived from our understanding of the course of the specific interventions in the villages we have studied. However, our sample being small, these principles need to be tested in other areas in different countries in Asia, by investigations into the working of given interventions as well as by initiating new interventions by using the method of action research.

The role of initiator

A village development project is in general initiated, not generated spontaneously. The initiator is sometimes external to the village, e.g. government agencies as in Comilla, or an autonomous agency as in the TRRM. Sometimes the initiative comes from within the village, but in terms of consciousness and understanding of the political economy of the society, the initiator may be somewhat more advanced

than those to be mobilized. This was the case, for example, in Deeder where Yasin, the initiator and leader, was a rickshaw-owner in the village, and in other villages in Comilla where local youth clubs have taken the initiative for village development.

The principles of project design which we are setting out to describe are addressed to such initiators whoever they are and, as mentioned above, are systematizations of our understanding of such initiatives, based on our probings.

Development, however, is itself a process of liberation of initiatives. It is the foremost task of the initiator of a rural development project, therefore, to identify the 'target group', whose creative initiatives need to be liberated, and thereafter to see that the project evolves as part of the process of liberation and is not imposed so as to inhibit this very process.

To achieve this, it is absolutely necessary that the target group make their own decisions as to what they want to do, when and how. The initiator may contribute to the decisions by entering into a dialogue with the target group, whereby he tries to integrate emotionally with the latter's consciousness and aspirations, and by making his own suggestions as to what may be done. He may generate questions for discussion, and may provoke the latent consciousness of the participants to bring positive forces therein into play. He may pick up creative ideas explicitly or implicitly suggested by a participant, to see if others would respond to these positively and whether consensus for action could be reached on the basis of these suggestions. He may see that decisions are not taken impulsively or passively, but are preceded by reflection, discussion and the careful consideration of alternatives. However, the decisions must belong to the participants, who must find in them a projection of their own creative image which stimulates them both in carrying out the decision and in further creative decision and action.

The target group

If any contradiction is sharp in the village, and a minority is oppressing a majority through it, it is necessary to improve the economic, social and political status of the oppressed majority whereby they may regain the creative initiatives they may have lost due to this oppression. If the contradiction is a relatively independent one, e.g. fishing, and oppresses a significant section of the village society, progress in reduction of such a contradiction would constitute a process of development in our sense. When project resources are scarce, however, priority may obviously be claimed by the fundamental contradiction of the time, as it is the root of an entire 'contradiction tree'.

This brings out the importance of studying contradictions in the village and of identifying the fundamental contradiction of the time.

As we have argued in the previous section, the fundamental contradiction, if it is sharp, has become a dynamic force in the society to which other economic and social relations adjust themselves. If this is true of existing institutions, this should also be true of new institutions, unless special care is taken to offset this tendency. The history of the development of the old and new cooperatives and the Total Village Development Programme in the Comilla area, described in the Bangladesh chapter, is a case in point. Many other studies of the so-called Green Revolution exist to bear out that the relative, and sometimes the absolute, economic and social position of the small and poor farmers has worsened as a result of the introduction of 'miracle' seeds which as a

technology is 'size-neutral', but which in practice has often been regarded as 'class-neutral'. These disastrous consequences of the Green Revolution are easily explained by the dynamic force of the fundamental contradiction in the areas of intervention, which has absorbed the intervention in its sweep and turned it into a tool for further polarization of the village societies, benefiting principally the already rich farmers who have been in control of both the economic system (base) and social institutions (superstructure) of the society.

From this, we derive our first major hypothesis for designing a rural development project, which we state as follows:

If the fundamental contradiction is sharp, then any 'class-neutral' intervention will get adjusted to its dynamics and cannot run counter to it.

In other words, a 'class-neutral' intervention is really class-biased.* It follows that under such conditions a village development project addressed to the oppressed as the target group must be class-biased by design. Thus for the Total Development Project in the Comilla area, the landless peasants and small farmers who are the main victims of the moneylending process need to be separated and singled out as the target group. In Sultanpur, likewise, a village development project must be a project for the Jatavs. On the other hand, in the TRRM area in Thailand, where the internal contradictions have not yet sharpened, and development of the village as a whole is inhibited by the drain of its surplus to the city through the marketing process which we have identified as the fundamental contradiction of the area, village development effort may address itself to the class of peasantry as a whole as the target group.

In all such cases, special attention may be given to improve the condition of the relatively poorer members of the target group faster than that of others, and for this purpose specific 'sub-projects' may be undertaken (e.g. piggeries for landless labourers in the TRRM project). Because of the relative weakness of the contradictions within the target group, it may be expected that such special efforts will not be resisted by other sections of the target group: it is when exploitation becomes a part of the conscious calculation of the politically dominant class in a community, and the contradiction becomes sharp for the same reason, that such 'progressive' measures may face resistance. Failure to do this will accentuate polarization within the target group and, as has been observed in the three cases, lead to the creation of a new dominating class.

The fundamental task

Once the target group has been identified in accordance with the above considerations, development may be seen in terms of improvement in the economic, social and political status of this group in the society. Among these, the question of political status is fundamental: if the target group as a class remains politically weak and is unable to exercise control over economic and social institutions in the society, the control of vested interests over these institutions will continue and inhibit sustained progress in attaining the overall development objectives of the project.

The political status of the target group vis-à-vis other members of the society cannot

* The whole complex of societal contradictions has been compared to a 'genetic mould' characteristic of a given society which tends to reproduce itself (Amit Bhaduri).

improve unless the target group is united.[1] It also requires an increase in the group's economic and psychological staying power, whereby its collective bargaining strength is enhanced. As we shall argue below, these two important tasks are interdependent and require a strategy in which progress in both these terms is mutually reinforcing.

Unity and collective staying power

We have already observed that disunity exists among the poor in the village. While the fundamental contradiction divides a society into an exploited and an exploiter class, necessitating the separation of the exploited as a target group, disunity among the exploited constitutes a barrier to the development of solidarity among them.

Just as the assumption of a homogeneous total village society often made in developmental effort has led to the designing of projects that have become a tool for further exploitation in societies where the dominant class is well entrenched in power, the assumption of a homogeneous exploited class is also erroneous and liable to yield the same or a similar result, by offering opportunity to the dominant and exploiter class to play upon the forces that divide the exploited.

Our field investigations have shown that there is a relationship between the disunity of the target group and their dependence on the rich. For instance, in Sultanpur the competition among the Jatavs for employment, on which their daily bread depends, stands in the way of their combining for almost any form of economic activity. As we have discussed (page 114), while the rich are also dependent on the poor, the dependency of the poor on the rich is of a more immediate character, creating asymmetry in an interdependent relationship.

[1] Their status may be strengthened by enlisting the support, and even participation in the project, of other sections of the society with whom the target group has no serious contradiction. Thus, for example, a target group consisting of landless and land-poor peasants may seek and find allies among the middle peasantry (who in situations as in Bangladesh are potential victims of the continuing process of polarization), among the youth, among the intelligentsia—if any—in the village, and even among sections of the government bureaucracy.

Ideally, participation in the project should be exclusive to the members of the target group and their 'allies', and those on the dominant side of the fundamental contradiction should be excluded as their interest would be to see that dominance-dependence relations persist rather than be weakened. In practice, however, this may not always be possible, particularly in villages where feudal or semi-feudal relations are still strong (e.g. Sultanpur). In such a situation the task of liberating the oppressed becomes more challenging, and some creative manoeuvring would be called for to keep control of the project and its evolution in the hands of the target group. Opportunity for such manoeuvring may be provided, for instance, by contradictions among the exploiters themselves (e.g. the situation in Sultanpur).

The dependence of the rich on the poor is the source of the latter's strength, and awareness of this fact is a crucial aspect of their consciousness. Our dialogical probings indicate that this awareness exists in varying degrees among the poor, and that they do recognize the need and importance of unity. What prevents them from achieving this, however, is a pragmatic recognition of their lack of staying power. Hence, in practice, they are tied individually to the rich.

This sums up into our second hypothesis, namely:

Disunity among the poor arises from asymmetrical dependency relations in an exploitative economic base.

As we have discussed (page 114), such dependency relations in the base generate dependency attitudes in the superstructure, in turn strengthening the dependency character of the base, and constituting a vicious circle. The linkage between dependency and disunity contained in the above hypothesis brings the latter also into the ambit of this vicious circle.

Generating the spiral

Our knowledge is not sufficient for us to suggest where this process of *negative* interaction between the base and the superstructure may lead on its own. A micro-partial analysis of this process in any case cannot take us very far, since extra-village linkages and pressures etc., national as well as international, have their respective roles to play in determining the course of this process.

Our concern, however, is to study whether this vicious circle can be broken, and be replaced by an ascending spiral of *positive* interaction between the superstructure and base to generate a process of real development. The investigations that we have made in the three countries suggest that this may be possible: in the Sultanpur area initial experiments have been promising; in the TRRM the process has moved further; and in Deeder such a spiral is well on its way. It is on the basis of these experiences that we suggest the following proposition.

The successful experience of a non-exploitative, genuinely cooperative economic base increases unity among the exploited and enables further expansion and strengthening of the cooperative base. The outstanding example of this is of course Deeder, which started with a cooperative base on a very small scale and developed it step by step as faith in cooperative activity was increasingly strengthened by experience of success.

Further, conscious action to generate such an ascending spiral begins in the superstructure. In other words, people have first to be brought together to agree to start a cooperative activity seriously *out of their own volition*, and not merely be led or attracted to it by legislation and external initiatives concerned with setting up cooperatives in form only, without first activating the necessary value in the superstructure.

The strategy of generating the ascending spiral that we see in operational terms, as suggested by the two hypotheses and the subsequent proposition, is the following:

1. Separate out the exploited as the target group.
2. Work in the superstructure to activate the cooperative values among the target group.
3. Initiate a cooperative activity by voluntary consensus among the target group or a sub-set of this group, ensuring maximum possible control of the activity in the hands of its participants.

4. As the cooperative base makes progress, work in the superstructure to strengthen faith in cooperative effort, to systematize experience from cooperation and derive constructive lessons therefrom (e.g. social education), and to advance further the cooperative economic base 'quantitatively' and 'qualitatively' (see 'Evaluation', page 126).

De-linking

Together, the above steps constitute a process of de-linking of the target group in the superstructure and in the base. The superstructure is de-linked as the psychological dependency of the target group on the exploited is reduced through cooperative action and social education, and the economic base becomes de-linked to the extent that the actual cooperative activity undertaken is independent of the prevailing exploitative base.

As the cooperative material base develops, whose success rests basically on motivational forces in the superstructure in whose strengthening success of the base itself contributes, the target group increasingly derives economic staying power and a stronger bargaining position. The solidarity that the process generates enables the target group to withstand better the manipulations of those interested in preserving the status quo of economic and social relations.

The purpose of de-linking is thus to reduce the economic and psychological dependency of the target group on the exploiters and thereby to provide a 'base' for the cultivation of group solidarity, cooperative and collective values, and for the exercise of their collective strength. This is not to be confused with a process of autarkic economic and social development of the target group, aiming at a discontinuation of the participation of the target group in the traditional exploitative economic base. Such a discontinuation would amount to surrendering claim to economic resources of the society, which might be considered a negative and perverse attitude to exploitation. While the target group develops its own, more independent, economic and social base, this must not be at the cost of its participation in the traditional modes of production.

De-linking in the above sense may thus be seen as *incremental* and not *total*, reducing dependency by mobilizing hitherto unemployed or disguised-unemployed resources and latent energies at the command of the oppressed, rather than shifting resources from traditional activities, in order to create what may be called 'self-reliant activity bases'.

Evolution

The project, then, starts in the superstructure. It may start among the oppressed themselves, or in some other quarter committed to the cause of the oppressed. It may start in some institution pertaining to the superstructure, e.g. the educational sphere (students), the cultural sphere (youth club) or the social sphere (tea stall). The initiator may go to such an institution, where people already come together with a collective identity, however incomplete, and look for a collective concern for the oppressed and try to activate this concern in terms of a desire to do something concrete.

The first major step is taken when the target group, or a sub-set of it, decide themselves to start a cooperative economic activity of their own, in the working of which the exploiters have little or no direct influence.

From then on, the project evolves in a self-generating way. There cannot be any external blueprint for development that seeks to liberate

the creative initiatives of the oppressed in a society: such a blueprint would inhibit rather than liberate these initiatives and dependency would be perpetuated in some form, even though it may be reduced in the traditional forms.

As the project evolves, subsequent stages are built on the collective experience of previous stages. The experience of concrete development efforts elsewhere—in the same country and even in other countries—systematized into a body of insights may be a useful input only in the superstructure of the project where the concrete conditions, tasks and problems are analysed, decisions are taken and progress is evaluated.

Staging

Being evolutionary, the project develops in stages. In some phases the development may be 'quantitative' only, being growth of the same or a similar form of activity in terms of increase in participation, the size of investment, diversification of activity, multiplication of the project in other areas, etc. A 'qualitative' advancement may be identified when a higher form of cooperation is initiated, such as moving from cooperative business to cooperative farming or industry, where cooperation in direct production is involved, or to collective ownership of assets (e.g. Deeder, when it took up a collective truck operation). The latter requires a greater initial sense of unity than the former to start the activity, and in turn brings people closer together, which may activate and strengthen forces in the superstructure for further qualitative advancement (e.g. from cooperative to collective farming).

There is a question of the timing of each such advancement, which can be premature or unnecessarily delayed. This, and the choice of the direction of advancement at any stage, would depend both on the internal dynamics of the project and on the overall social environment. The internal dynamics concerns:

1. The material capacity of the project to advance (e.g. by accumulation of savings and the creation of collective physical assets).
2. The stage of institutional development (e.g. the consolidation of the collective forum as a decision-making body, the accumulation of experience in collective administration, etc.).
3. Perhaps most important of all, the development of collective consciousness which is the immediate driving force for action.

In deciding to move to qualitatively higher forms of cooperation in particular, the state of collective consciousness is a strategic factor as far as the internal dynamics of the project is concerned. Being in a process of evolution, the state of collective consciousness of the participants in the project, at any point in time, has both static (position) and dynamic (momentum) characteristics, the discerning of which is one of the most challenging tasks of dialogical research. It is by the correct understanding of both these static and dynamic characteristics of collective consciousness that timely decisions to advance may be taken.

The failure of cooperative farming in Deeder, where a single failure in the base destroyed the spirit of cooperative farming in the superstructure, suggests that this spirit was possibly not strong enough yet and that the value as such had not yet taken any real root. From this point of view, a move for qualitative advancement of the project can be premature. On the other hand, too long a wait may depress the forward-moving tendencies in the superstructure and permit negative forces (e.g. individualistic ambitions) to settle down, as a result of which the project may lose its for-

ward momentum and gradually slide back. For example, in the TRRM project in Thailand, having evolved through activities connected with health, education and livelihood to the creation of institutions like credit unions and buying clubs, the project is now in danger of stagnating as it has not moved to the next logical step of addressing itself to the fundamental problem of marketing.

From this point of view, some advanced experimentation on a manageable scale with higher forms of cooperation may be undertaken at any stage before embarking on more ambitious leaps. Such experimentation may be considered part of the very process of probing into the state of collective consciousness to assess its dynamic characteristics, and in the process also to stimulate further the positive forces in the consciousness.

Further examination of concrete evolution of projects is needed to discern subtler logics of staging. Ultimately, decision in this regard has to rest on collective subjective judgement, intuitions, and the state of resolve of the participants in the project on the basis of rational knowledge. What seems important is that when a decision to move forward is taken, it should be taken with a purpose rationalized in terms of the objectives of promoting unity and collective self-reliance, and failures should be analysed to derive constructive lessons therefrom, so that even a failure may represent a step forward.

Multiplication

An isolated village development project may not by itself go very far in attaining its fundamental political objective. The exploiters have extra-village linkages, and derive their ultimate power from these. To match this power, the exploited also have to combine over wider areas. For this purpose the multiplication of a project in other areas (in a creative, not duplicative sense—see 'Cadre training', page 125) must be one of its important strategic principles.

If similar projects are already running in other areas, linking up with these also serves the purpose of achieving wider unity. Such linking is therefore included in the term 'multiplication'.

By multiplication, participants in one area do not feel isolated, and greater social power is generated for each project. This helps to sustain a project against resistance that may come from exploiters in its own area or as a class in the society who may see in such projects a threat to their exploitative interests.

As a strategy in *staging* the development of a project and in asserting the political power of the exploited, such 'horizontal' spreading out for improving the overall social environment in the project's favour is an important consideration to be weighed against a unilateral 'vertical' advancement that may evoke greater resistance from the exploiters. It may be prudent not to make critical 'vertical' moves before the project has multiplied sufficiently.

Multiplication has other advantages in terms of enhancing the creative wealth of every project through cross-fertilization: it mobilizes a larger body of innovative initiatives, and the benefit from their consummation becomes available to all the projects through an exchange of experiences. The progress in self-reliant development by the exploited in one area may by itself provide stimulation to the exploited in other areas to take collective initiatives of their own towards self-reliance. The knowledge of innovative actions in other areas can stimulate the release of creative energy in any area, and the exchange of ideas and eva-

luation of experiences are also of obvious benefit. Through all this, ideas, experiences and innovations originating in any one project get multiplied and mutually reinforced, and those of one become those of every project. Finally, the forward momentum in one area may generate or strengthen that in another.

Cadre training

This makes the training of cadres a very important activity in any pioneer village development project. Cadre training for initiating self-reliant processes is a challenging task also, for such processes by concept and definition cannot be mechanically duplicated. For each project they will be original and specific to the state of collective consciousness of the participants and the resources at their disposal, taking inspirations and lessons from other projects but never copying a 'blueprint'. Cadres need to be trained, therefore, primarily in the 'art' of assisting in the generation and evolution of self-reliant activities. They need most to develop the correct *sensitivities* to the objective and subjective characteristics of a situation, rather than mechanical guidelines. Such sensitivities cannot be cultivated in the abstract, and have to be acquired through a process of personal involvement in action research.

Secondary contradictions

As a project evolves with the main objective of resolving the fundamental contradiction of the village in favour of the exploited, the question of secondary contradictions may emerge and call for constructive policies towards them. As discussed earlier, secondary contradictions may be present within the target group itself (e.g. between men and women, young and old), and between the target group and another class in society with whom the principal exploiters of the target group may be in close alliance.

Such contradictions may be sharp by themselves, and the consciousness of the exploited may be preoccupied with and directed against them as outlets for the overall frustrations caused by their environment. On the other hand, some of these contradictions may sharpen in the process of mobilization of the target group for resolution of the fundamental contradiction: for instance, the liberation of the mind that collective dialogues and action are intended to promote may raise the consciousness of the women of the target group about their relationship to the men, which as we observed earlier is often very exploitative, deriving its strength basically from the political supremacy of men in the society.

This highlights the need for carefully identifying the priorities of the project and for a careful balancing of relationships within the target group. Attacking a secondary contradiction diffuses the issues and provides valuable cover to the principal exploiters in the society. Division on the basis of a secondary contradiction within the target group weakens the group as a whole, whereas the need is to unite rather than to divide the group further.

The role of social education in directing energies according to the priorities of the time is in this context considerable. However, the specific question of *antagonistic contradictions within the target group* needs careful handling: it may be counter-productive to ignore urges of the women, for example, to be liberated from the men, particularly if such urges are generated naturally in the very process of mobilization of the target group for self-reliant activities. Instead of confronting such natural urges, the strategy should be to

recognize them and accommodate them through the creation of institutions to give greater political strength to the 'oppressed within the oppressed' (e.g. association of poor peasants' wives), directing, however, this new strength of the women not for internal confrontation within the target group but *for strengthening the combined political power of the group for resolution of the principal contradiction*. The same principle applies to youth clubs vis-à-vis older members of the oppressed community and to separate associations of landless peasants in situations where even landed peasants, who hire the former and exploit them in the process, may be victims of the fundamental contradiction of the village.

Evaluation

In the foregoing pages we have outlined principles for initiating a rural development project whose fundamental objective is to enhance the political status of the exploited in a village. We have indicated that irrespective of who initiates such a project, its evolution must be seen as a self-generating process in which subsequent stages are built on the collective experience of the previous ones. For this, collective experience needs to be periodically assessed and systematized. This is the task of evaluation of the project as we view it.

In this sense, evaluation is simultaneously a part of the internal dynamics of the project and an assessment of progress from the standpoint of the world view from which its fundamental objective is derived.

The internal motivational objective of evaluation is to increase the target group's understanding of their own experience through systematic collective self-assessment, and in this process to improve articulation of and commitment to the tasks they have set themselves to achieve, to derive constructive lessons from their experience, and finally to derive motivational force for political resolve towards collective action for promoting their objectives.

The assessment of progress towards the fundamental objective seeks to capture the qualitative change taking place in the overall social relations as a result of—but going beyond—the incremental changes occurring in the other dimensions.

Criteria for evaluation

The specific criteria to be used as focal points for such evaluation purposes cannot be laid down externally in a prescriptive manner. However, the experience we have narrated, and the hypotheses we have derived therefrom, crystallize a number of criteria or *values* that are of strategic importance for the realization of the objectives of a rural development project. These values, which have been discussed throughout our study, are grouped together now, recognizing however that the set of values that the participants of a project may choose for themselves will be specific to the phase of the project (e.g. staging). The totality of these strategic values is thereafter viewed within the framework of the fundamental objective, namely, to enhance the political status of the target group in the society.

The set of criteria that we are enlisting are all interrelated and mutually reinforcing. But they are still distinct as values. They deserve to be presented separately not only for their own sake but also, and more importantly, because they contribute to each other's growth and thereby to total progress. By presenting and discussing them separately, attention is focused upon the need to promote each of them in such a way as to stress not only the

individual contributions but also their joint contribution. Circumstances may offer one or other of these values individually as the one easier to promote under specific circumstances, which in turn could set an overall forward moving process in motion, and such choice of 'promoters' has to rest on careful deliberation on the possibilities offered by each of these values separately. Finally, the whole process may be retarded or, even worse, backslide, if for any specific reason one or more of these individual values trail too far behind, and vigilance against this possibility must therefore be exercised.

The basic institution

The basic institution, a value by itself, that a village project needs to create is the *forum* for systematic deliberation by the target group on all issues that concern them. This may consist of at least one weekly meeting where everyone participates. The meetings may initially be informal, allowing the evolution of a formal structure of their own in due course. As this structure evolves, it may be assessed from time to time in terms of the contribution it is making to the mobilization of constructive ideas, to removing inhibitions in the way of free exchange of thoughts, and to the structuring of discussions for more efficient deliberations.

In addition to the weekly forum which all members of the target group are encouraged to attend, forums for different sub-sets of the target group and others in alliance with them are also important. The more people—men, women, youth, different castes, or various cross-sections of these sub-sets—acquire the practice of getting together for constructive discussion of questions of common concern and mutual interest the better, and the generation of such practice may be an important operational objective of the project.

Criteria for the economic base

Economic benefit. The project must bring economic benefit to the participants. Without this, economic staying power is not increased, and dependence on the traditional exploitative economic base is not reduced. Furthermore, at the level of subsistence, or below subsistence where people are basically struggling with life, material incentive should be an important motivation to mobilize them for cooperative effort.

Distributional equity. The economic benefit must accrue to all in a way that is assessed by the participants to be fair. Failing this, the activity itself will generate divisive contradiction among the participants and frustrate the fundamental objective of reducing such contradictions.

Collective accumulation. The activity should generate a process of collective accumulation, i.e. there should be an agreed arrangement by which a portion of the economic benefit is pooled as collective savings for the building up of collective assets. Such assets, which are the visible symbols of the collective, would enable growth of the activity base, contribute to the paying off of any external debts which is necessary for self-reliance, and expand and strengthen further the material basis of collective solidarity.

Horizontal expansion. The activity should expand horizontally, in the sense both of expanding the size of local participation and of multiplication in other areas.

Developing linkages. In order to reap the benefits of multiplication systematically, and also to establish systematic, mutually stimulating and supportive relationships with other

[1] Should there be major differences on matters of substance, democracy requires a consensus on the rules of arriving at collective decisions, so that the majority may 'rule' with the 'consent' of the minority. Such consensus for rules of decision making may not be sought in a hurry, but allowed to be based on elaborate discussion, reflection and, if possible, experience. Such 'praxis'-based consensus should be the more lasting, and lack of such a basis may be an explanation why rules of 'democracy' transplanted from other cultures have more often than not been failures. It may be necessary even to desist from imposing rules of democracy on *newer participants* in a project, who have not had the same experience as participants of longer standing from out of which the rules have emerged, and expansion of membership itself may generate newer dimensions to the question of consensus. From this point of view, the rules of democracy need themselves periodically to be reviewed, and the process of arriving at the rules repeated, with the new participants, even if this means arriving at the same rules.

self-reliant efforts that may already exist elsewhere, social and institutional linkages with all such ventures need to be formed. An exchange of cadres and periodic joint 'workshops' for exchange and systematization of experiences should be fostered for such purpose.

Attitudinal criteria

The establishment of a self-reliant activity base, if successful, will itself contribute to promoting positive attitudinal values. Conscious attempts to diagnose, assert and mutually stimulate such values brings them to the fore and contributes to turning them into a driving force for further action. The following are some of the more important values:

1. *Sense of solidarity*, meaning an affinity among the target group that makes them stay together and turn to each other for material and emotional support, a concern for each other's wellbeing, and an urge to have constructive dialogues with each other about issues of individual, mutual and common concern.
2. *Democratic values*, meaning a concern that the specific views of each should be listened to, a respect for each other's views and a desire not to impose decisions on others but to try to arrive at a consensus. [1]
3. *Spirit of cooperation*, meaning not only getting together to decide on joint activity and act accordingly, but also to go beyond one's formally assigned responsibility to take constructive interest in the work of others and assist them in performing their tasks. This spirit of cooperation may be extended not only to participants in the project, but also to those members of the target group who may not yet have joined the project but whose inclusion through demonstration of the economic and social

value of the project remains one of the project's objectives.

4. *Collective spirit*, meaning an urge to see common interests of the group as a whole and to seek fulfilment by contributing to the promotion of such interests.
5. *Creative spirit*, meaning an urge to innovate, to seek new resources, to seek and innovate new technology, to make organizational and administrative innovations, to make experiments, to solve problems and not to run away from them or expect others to solve them.
6. *Spirit of collective self-reliance*, meaning seeking maximum fulfilment in mobilizing the group's own physical and mental resources, looking at external resources as secondary and supplementary means only, not seeking external resources at terms dictated by the donor, not accepting external charity, and a resolve to repay all external debts.

Self-administration and momentum

Experience in economic and social administration. An attempt should be made to systematize the experiences in economic and social administration that the project itself generates, so that these may be applied in other areas as the project multiplies, and on such systematic experience further administrative innovations may be built.

Generation of internal cadres: For its further development and multiplication a project must generate internal cadres, who are to play a leadership role in mobilizing the target group for the various economic, administrative and value-generating tasks of the project, who will be rooted in the daily lives of the target group and who will demonstrate exemplary personal values. They will also be the 'spread agents' in multiplying the project and linking with similar projects in other areas.

Indigenous momentum. A project should acquire indigenous momentum of its own in material, institutional, psychological and leadership terms and thereby become truly self-reliant in an overall sense. A crucial test of this is whether the project can continue without loss of momentum if the original initiators, whether external or internal, and any external resources are withdrawn. No amount of progress in any other sense can be considered fundamental if the project would receive a serious setback at the withdrawal of its initiators and external resources.

Overall evaluation

The question may be asked: can such different criteria as listed above be *aggregated* in order to obtain an assessment of overall progress of the project?

As we have stated, the different criteria may all be considered important and mutually reinforcing. There is no room, therefore, for a linear trade-off between them, hence the use of relative quantitative weights for aggregating them into a single indicator of progress. Some criteria may have greater priority in certain stages of development of the project than others; but, among the criteria appropriate for each stage, there must be significant progress in terms of each for balanced development of the project. [11]

Moreover, an aggregation of the above criteria alone would be akin to a 'physical mixture', which would, however, be unable to indicate whether the necessary *qualitative change* is taking place, which is analogous to a 'chemical compound'. The basic question to ask is whether, as a result of progress being made in the several dimensions discussed above, a

[11] See 'harmonic growth' as conceptualized by Janos Kornai (*Rush Versus Harmonic Growth*, North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1972). Kornai's objections to the use of a single indicator for measuring growth of an economy provide argument and analogy supporting the above point of view about project evaluation:

'It is a widespread custom to characterize the development of some country with *a single* indicator; mostly with the average annual (compound) growth rate of Gross National Product, Gross Domestic Product or National Income. This is done by many politicians and journalists. And we cannot bypass their procedure by saying that "they are not qualified economists" since the same is done by many academic people and professors in economics.

'In chapter 3 I have listed twelve requirements, and some of them have several partial requirements in addition. Most of these cannot be measured with a single indicator even if taken separately. Let us think, e.g., of requirement No. 4.2 (protection of health) or of requirement No. 6.2 (harmony between the demand of the economy for specialists and the number of specialists available), or requirement No. 8.2 (qualitative development of products). To measure the fulfilment of any of them necessitates a whole series of indicators.

'True, the analysis of the problem becomes thus incomparably more complicated. No use—we have to put up with this situation. No kind of simplification can acquit us from the sin against scientific methodology and economic policy: of measuring with a single indicator. Medical science too is compelled to put up with this complexity when it describes the state of health of man not with a single indicator (e.g., only with his blood pressure or his weight) but, if it is necessary, it considers 10 or 50 or even 100 indicators. Why would we economists strive to simplify our tasks in an unpermissible manner?' (*Rush Versus Harmonic Growth*, pp. 61–2)

change is taking place in the *social consciousness* of the target group. The development of social consciousness, which consists of (a) an understanding of exploitation in the society and (b) liberation from psychological dependence on the exploiters which makes exploitation possible, requires social education—analysis of experience, concrete action, reflection, and deriving lessons from experiences of other societies. Without social education, a mere decrease in the dependency relation in the economic base will not reduce dependency in the superstructure or raise social consciousness.

Finally, there is the question of the fundamental task—enhancement of *political power* of the target group. The test of this is whether the principal process of exploitation of which the target group is the major victim is being reduced by virtue of the increasing strength which the group derives from the project, and whether conditions are being created to move towards asserting the group's power as direct producers in the society.

A striking case which brings the importance of the question of social consciousness and political power into sharp focus is the Saemaul Movement of South Korea.* The positive impact of the movement at the village level in terms of the economic, attitudinal and management criteria is apparent, though deeper probing is required to understand the exact nature of the accumulation of the attitudinal values. Given that internal contradictions within the village have been considerably softened by a series of policy measures, the crucial question that needs to be studied is the fundamental contradiction in the mode of produc-

* A description of the impact of the Saemaul Movement in Daehan-Dong village in South Korea, which we have investigated in an exploratory visit, is given in the Annexure on page 133.

tion, and the role of the Saemaul Movement in that context. As has been discussed in the case of Thailand, a relatively homogeneous village society may still be in sharp contradiction with the urban sector through such processes as marketing, etc. The Saemaul Movement needs, from this point of view, to be evaluated particularly in terms of the social consciousness that it is creating regarding the fundamental contradiction and, further, the contribution it is making towards its resolution.

To continue the analogy, then, the question is not only that of a physical mixture (criteria for economic base, attitudes, etc.), nor of a qualitatively different chemical compound (social consciousness), but also of changing the 'genetic mould' of the society (the totality of social relations, see page 119), altering the course of social processes through an interaction pattern that would now be fundamentally different.

This, in the final analysis, is the ultimate aggregator.

Visual presentation

It is worthwhile, however, to try to capture evaluation of progress in terms of the different criteria visually and together. To do this we use a graphical device—the 'sociogram' below (see page 132).

The smaller circle, divided into three segments, contains scaled indicators (from zero to ten). The values or indicators used in each segment (e.g. economic benefit, democratic values, internal cadres) would be specific to each project and its phase, and would primarily be decided by the participants collectively.

Progress in terms of each of the criteria is assessed within the given scale (ten represents a performance which, in the assessment of the participants, could not have been bettered). Such numerical assessment of individual characteristics of a performance is in fact common practice in social and cultural lives (e.g. in assessment of singing, debating, essay writing, personality and character, etc.), and is also usual in Asian villages (e.g. in Bangladesh, 'sholo anna', meaning 16 annas which is 1 taka, is the villagers' valuation of full credit; 'shiki' is a quarter credit, and so on).

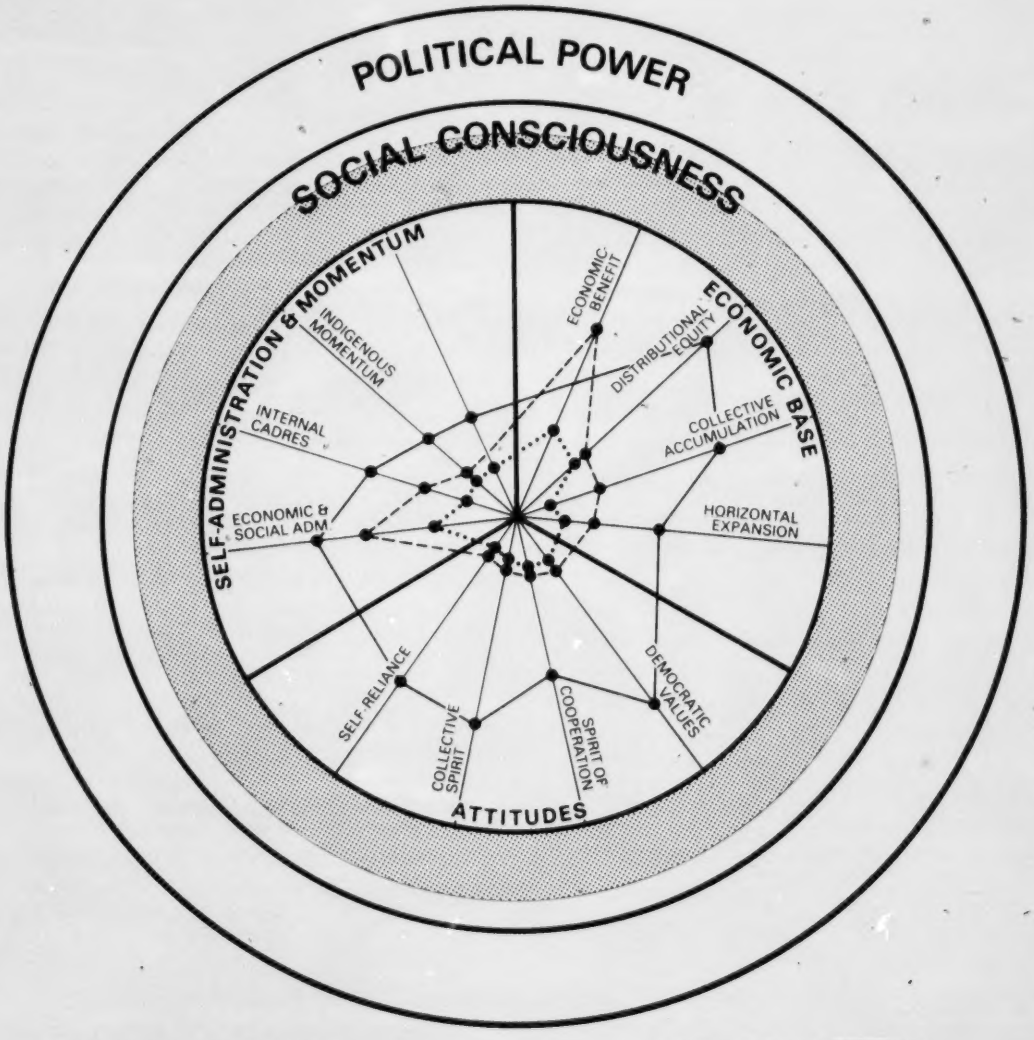
Progress made in terms of the criteria represented in the smaller circle is to be viewed within the framework provided by the two outer bands of progressively larger circles, representing social consciousness and political power respectively. Progress in these indicators is measured along the width of the respective bands (again scaled from zero to ten) by shaded portions as shown in the diagram.

The diagram illustrates evaluation of two projects, and of one of the projects at two points in time. It may be seen that the contours in the smaller circle, sketched by joining the points representing the respective grades for the dimensions concerned, give distinctive patterns characteristic of the projects. The shaded areas in the two outer circles similarly characterize the progress made in their respective dimensions. Project A, while showing considerable progress in economic benefit, has advanced little in other dimensions. In contrast, Project B shows a more balanced development in all dimensions. It has also generated social consciousness, depicted by the shaded area in the first outer circle.

The pattern of the sociogram as a whole may be called the 'performance badge' of the project for the stage under review.

Such a graphical representation of project performance would serve, it is suggested, as a device for the convergence of the participants' individual understanding of what progress is being made, and thereby would 'objectify' the

Figure 1 Sociogram for Evaluation of Rural Development Projects



evaluation for record as 'collective memory'. The process of trying to arrive at a consensus about the various dimensions of the badge should itself be intensely educative for the participants. It should stir up minds, and help to improve the articulation of the various criteria and promote the corresponding values themselves. A visually represented consensus on performance in a project may help to mobilize energies to correct deficiencies identified thereby; an assertion of success through such a device may inspire greater efforts to promote further the objectives of the project. In this way, the badge may serve as a rallying point for the target group for the task of their social and economic upliftment.

Field testing

The principles of project design and evaluation proposed in this chapter have evolved from interaction of our conceptions and field investigations. The next stage in the process of enriching both theory and practice consists of taking these propositions to the field again for testing and refinement.

Annexure: The impact of the Saemaul Movement on Daehan-Dong village, Gyeongsan-gun (county), South Korea

Daehan-Dong village has a population of 365, grouped into 65 households. All the families are engaged in farming. The total land area in the village is nearly 824 acres, of which 627 acres are forest and 97 acres are arable; the rest is used for housing.

The village is located in a remote mountainous area, approximately 84 miles from the major port and industrial centre of Pusan. It is six miles off a main road and 19 miles from the county office. The village consists of four separate settlements, with traditional agricultural and other activities being carried out on an individual basis. Cultivation is mainly dependent on rainfall, with only 30 per cent of the land having irrigation facilities.

In 1974, the average income was 640,000 won (US $1,333) per household. Seven families were landless and in debt. The village was thus classified by the government as 'underdeveloped', in the Saemaul Undong classification. An 'underdeveloped' village is one in which the income level is lower than the national average and where there are no positive endeavours by the people for cooperative development of their community. A second category is a 'developing' village, where there are growing efforts by the people to develop their village through self-help. The third category is the 'self-sufficient' stage, when villagers develop their community mainly through their own efforts and enjoy higher incomes and basic amenities in the form of social services, the requisite physical infrastructure and a congenial environment.

The Saemaul Undong

During the 1960s the South Korean economy grew at a rate of 10 per cent per annum, supported by massive inflows of foreign aid and private foreign investment. The growth was concentrated in the modern urban industrial and mining sectors. This pattern of development not only caused significant disparities in urban/rural incomes, but also led to a large migration from rural to urban areas. The earlier distribution, with 70 per cent of the population in rural areas, had changed by the early 1970s to 50 per cent in urban areas and, if the trend continued, it was expected that urban population would increase to 70 per cent of the total by 1981. This movement of population has been very intense in the Gyeongsan-gun area, as it is mountainous with poor soil and has traditionally low agricultural productivity. There is a steady migration of the youth and able-bodied from here to the urban industrial areas around Pusan.

The social and political consequences of these income and population migration trends led the government in 1970 to initiate the Saemaul Undong or the New Community Movement, 'in which peo-

ple work together in order to construct better and richer villages, and as a consequence, a richer and stronger nation'.

The Saemaul Undong is a nationwide, integrated, rural development movement based on 'the spirit of diligence, self-help and cooperation'. These three elements are defined as follows:

'The spirit of diligence is to inspire the ethics of the workman in the hearts of men to help them work hard in this spirit until they can live better. The spirit also requires the people to maintain the fruits and achievements of their hard work. It is also to encourage the people to cultivate the habit of honesty and savings.'

'The spirit of self-help is to guide an individual person to know himself first. It is to lead him not to depend on others but to learn self-discipline. It is also meant to inspire the spirit of self-reliance in his heart and thus help him develop his personal capacity, to help and protect himself.'

'The cooperative spirit is meant to integrate the powers at least of two persons and let them exercise the basic principles of 1+1=2+a, thus creating extra power. The true meaning of the cooperative spirit in the movement is the spirit that inspires individuals to voluntarily help each other. It employs the principles of cooperative work and division of labour.'

The government gives support to these self-help and cooperative efforts when they are faced with difficult problems. The support is in the form of financial (mainly supply of materials or equipment), administrative and technical assistance.

An important element of the movement is the orientation and training of the elected local cadres. The Saemaul leaders are given training through two types of programme. The first is at the national level and is aimed at raising the leaders' level of consciousness and ability to motivate people. Leaders from all parts of the country are brought in groups to participate in these programmes. Cabinet Ministers, senior government officials, university professors and other élites and technical experts also have to participate as part of their de-programming, as well as to exchange ideas with the village leaders. Irrespective of status, all participants dress alike, eat the same food and sleep in the same dormitories during the training, which consists of such subjects as the philosophy of the movement, leadership, scientific ways of living, etc. The methodology is mainly through discussion of successful cases. The second level of training occurs at the provincial and county level, with emphasis on providing material benefits and on local problems of a more technical nature, such as farm management, cash-crop production, agricultural civil engineering and construction of farm machinery.

Official reports indicate that during the first five years of Saemaul Undong, between 1971 and 1975, villagers built 24,645 miles of village roads, 25,761 miles of farm roads, 50,952 small bridges, 8,302 irrigation ponds, 11,301 dykes, 1,570 water channels, 27,051 village halls, 13,258 village warehouses, 372 village factories and 11,235 hydraulic water-supply systems. They carried out reforestation projects covering 3,957,500 acres of land and installed 10,429 village telephones. They accumulated US $137,500,000 in Postal Savings, US $456,875,000 in Agricultural Cooperative Savings, US $46,666,000 in Fisheries Cooperative Savings and US $55,416,000 in Village Credit Union funds. The government invested about $579 million on these Saemaul projects and the value of completed projects is estimated at about 2.5 times the government spending.

Historical background

The following historical developments help to explain some of the preconditions which served to provide a base from which the Saemaul Movement could be launched:

1. In the 1940s, after the Korean Japanese war, as part of the decolonization from Japanese rule, the Japanese were forced to withdraw politically and economically and those Koreans associated with Japanese interests had their properties confiscated.
2. The Korean war, with two successive waves of

southward thrust and the repulse, destroyed a great deal of capital infrastructure. This had a levelling effect and permitted the national reconstruction effort to start with a relatively clean slate.

3. Massive external assistance permitted the building of the physical infrastructure, e.g. roads, power and rural electrification and the telecommunications system.
4. In the early 1950s a major land reform programme was instituted. Land was redistributed to tillers with an initial ceiling of 7½ acres per person. With the abolition of the semi-feudal tenancy system, combined with massive foreign aid, the foundation of vigorous capitalist development was laid under what may be called 'non-classical conditions'.
5. In the 1960s there was a significant expansion of secondary education.
6. In 1968, in response to the problem of heavy rural indebtedness, a moratorium on rural debt was declared by law. All indebtedness was transferred to the rural banking system, which was expanded and strengthened. Repayment was re-negotiated on easy terms.
7. The rural banking system was supplemented by an elaborate network of marketing and purchasing cooperatives through which farm products and inputs were channelled. The rural banking and marketing systems have now been merged under the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation. The NACF is not only engaged in marketing farm output through crop and livestock auction centres located in urban areas, but is also the main source of rural credit.

Impact of the movement on Daehan-Dong village

In several South Korean villages the initial impact of the Saemaul Movement was to increase rural incomes and generate cooperative activities. In Daehan-Dong village, however, changes have come slowly. Initially, there was no noticeable response to the movement's thrust. The Saemaul Movement was started by the government with the distribution of free cement to all villages, with the expectation that this would act as a catalyst in improving living conditions and environmental sanitation. While some families in the village individually utilized the cement to rebuild their roofs, or added a kitchen or toilet, the experiment had little effect in bringing about a sense of community among the people of the four separate settlements in Daehan-Dong. And the initial Saemaul leadership in this village had little training in motivating people or encouraging them to help each other.

It was only in 1974 with the election of two new leaders, a man and a woman, who had received specialized training in the National Training Centre for Saemaul Leaders that things began to move.

The current male village leader, who was elected in 1974, was a village school graduate and a former headman of the village. He is paid no salary. He and his family own 3¼ acres of land. (The average holding per family is 1½ acres.) He spent the whole of his first year on voluntary Saemaul work, but now spends part of his time on Saemaul work and part of his time on his own land. He indicated that he does not intend to stand for re-election, as he has performed his catalytic role 'in bringing the people together, generating a community spirit, and in improving the village environment'. He felt that a younger man with technical know-how was now required to give the leadership, as the next stage of development was concerned with expanding income-boosting projects.

The initial effort of the new village leaders was to enter into a dialogue with the villagers and initiate a discussion on their problems. The next step was to encourage them to form a group to discuss common problems. Out of these discussions came the first group decision, which was to build a village road with voluntary labour. The road was to lead from the main highway to a Buddhist monument on a small mountain. The monument was in the form of a Buddha statue built 1,500 years ago in the Silla dynasty. The rationale was that the monument could be an attraction for Korean tourists and would generate some additional income for the village. This was a non-controversial activity and found support among all the people.

The group has now crystallized into a village as-

sembly which meets every fortnight. At least one person from each household is expected to attend. Attendance is on a voluntary basis, and meetings are announced through loudspeakers. The current attendance is 70 per cent. In response to a question, it was stated that absences were mainly for personal reasons. Decisions are taken by a majority vote. Initially representation was by the male head of the family, but there is now increased participation by women and also by village youth through their membership in 4H clubs. A sub-group has also been formed by the female Saemaul leader for discussion among women.

Adult training classes conducted by the Saemaul leaders through discussion and audio-visual techniques have helped to raise the villagers' level of education, as well as improving their ability to keep farm accounts, perform simple technical tasks such as the repair and maintenance of equipment, and practise home economics and family planning.

The combined effect of the discussions in the village assembly, the women's groups, 4H clubs and the adult education classes was an increased interest in further community development activity. The absence of wide disparities in the village led the people to expect that participation in these activities would result in an equitable distribution of the benefits. The building of the tourist road was followed by the building of feeder roads from each settlement, thereby linking the farm settlements and also making it easier to transport farm produce to the market. This in turn led to exploration of additional income-boosting projects, such as livestock raising and fruit growing. Environmental improvements and health programmes are currently being discussed by the women's groups and the 4H clubs. Two larger projects are also being debated by the village assembly, relating to the village water supply and rural electrification. County and governmental support is being provided for these two projects in the form of loans and materials as well as technical know-how. Thirty per cent of the cost of the rural electrification project is to be provided by the villagers themselves.

It is clear that to get the people to break out of the stagnant situation, action had to be initiated at the lowest organizational level—the village—with the people's involvement. Critical institutions at the village level which have helped to initiate the process and sustain the effort are (a) the new cadres, (b) the village assembly and other sub-groups, like the women's groups and youth groups, and (c) the village fund.

Evaluation

The Saemaul Movement has obviously brought about considerable changes in Daehan-Dong village. The measures of the previous two decades, such as land reform, the creation of cooperative credit and marketing institutions, generated a social environment within which the Saemaul Movement could flourish. The three measures taken together considerably diminished, if not eliminated, exploitation based on land, moneylending and marketing.

The relative equality of the villagers has produced a more homogeneous rural society with no sharp class conflicts. This contrasts with polarization processes observable in many Asian rural societies which have adopted new technology without the kind of measures that have been taken in Korea.

The Saemaul Movement, therefore, provided the concrete impetus to mobilize the communities whose internal contradictions had been considerably reduced. Experiences with the initial projects were encouraging enough for the villagers to initiate more complex cooperative activities. Further probing could begin by exploring the following areas:

1. Attitudinal values, such as cooperation and collective efforts, have become a part of the vocabulary of the movement. The effectiveness of these values in guiding the daily decisions in the lives of the people, particularly in situations of conflict—e.g. individual versus the collective, interests of few against many—needs to be investigated.
2. The actual working of the forums needs to be studied from the point of view of democratic decision making and the concrete analysis of experience in the cultivation and practice of the attitudinal values.

3. The development of the forums to go beyond issues of immediate intra-village interest to questions of wider social relations, generating consciousness through concrete social education, needs to be explored.

4. The question of how much effective political power is being shifted to the villagers through the movement, so as to give them increasing control over decisions which affect their lives, requires careful examination.

Notes

2 The Comilla Experiment and the Total Village Development Programme—Bangladesh

1 For a detailed study of the agrarian mode of production and rural power structure in Comilla see Huq, M. Ameerul (ed.), *Exploitation and the Rural Poor*, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Comilla, 1976.

3 The Rural Reconstruction Project—Thailand

1 *Rural Reconstruction and Development*, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Philippines, 1967.

2 Siamwala, Ammar, 'Stability, Growth and Distribution in Thai Economy' in *Finance, Trade and Economic Development in Thailand*, Bank of Thailand, 1974, pp. 25–48 and 'A History of Rice Price Policies in Thailand', ibid., pp. 141–65.

3 Kardpibula, Udom, 'Distribution of Income and Wealth in Thailand', ibid., pp. 279–316.

4 *A Socio-Economic Study of the Four Villages under the TRRM Reconstruction and Development Programme , Chainat Province*, Social Science Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, 1974.

5 Kardpibula, Udom, op. cit.

6 *Area Agricultural Situations of Amphur Salkaburi, Chainat Province*, Division of Agricultural Economics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, 1975.

7 *A Socio-Economic Study of the Four Villages under the TRRM Reconstruction and Development Programme, Chainat Province*, op. cit.

8 *Area Agricultural Situations of Amphur Salkaburi, Chainat Province*, op. cit.

9 Kardpibula, Udom, op. cit.

10 Siamwala, Ammar, op. cit.

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Document

International Communications and Third World Participation

By Juan Somavía

In May 1976, the Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales (ILET) held a seminar on 'The Role of Information in the New International Order' in Mexico City. The seminar was organized in cooperation with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the principal papers submitted to the seminar were printed in DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE *(1976:2). Since then, a highly interesting and—at times—emotional debate has developed over this subject internationally. As part of its persistent efforts to find practical solutions to the problem of the disequilibrium in the pattern of communication flows between industrialized and Third World countries, ILET organized another seminar in Amsterdam from 5 to 8 September this year. The theme of this seminar was 'International Communications and Third World Participation'. More than 60 participants and observers—academics, professionals and government officials—attended the meeting and nine papers were submitted for their consideration. The discussions focussed on the following agenda items: the present state of the debate on Third World participation in international communications; conceptual considerations in the search for change and mutual understanding; concrete action to improve Third World coverage in international communications.*

The Inaugural Address by the Executive Director of ILET, Juan Somavía, gave an overview of some of the empirical, conceptual and political issues involved and served to initiate the discussions. Somavía was subsequently invited to participate in the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems recently convened by UNESCO.

I should like to welcome the seminar participants to our discussions and to express my appreciation to those others of you who have been motivated to be present at this opening session. I should also like to use this opportunity to acknowledge the support of the Dutch Government for ILET research activities.

ILET is an academic institution based in Latin America. It has a Third World perspective and its work is oriented by a deeply rooted belief that many far-reaching changes are today necessary in most Third World societies and that national development strategies centered on the satisfaction of human needs, endogenous in their conception, self-reliant in their implementation and respectful of the environment, are urgently needed. It requires the recognition of pluralism as a basic guiding value, the organization of the people through

meaningful participation, and structural reforms to make these changes possible.

This goal, this aspiration, cannot be fully reached today because the latent creativity of many Third World societies is constrained by oppressive structures which benefit the few as against the many and which promote the interests of small, so-called 'elites' over the needs of the large majorities, who live in poverty and destitution.

But the world can neither fight nor long resist an idea whose time has come. We believe that the time has come for the liberation of the Third World from its internal and external bondages and that intellectual self-reliance will assure the success of that struggle.

We are convinced that our research is meaningful to the extent that it is socially relevant, that it is addressed to real issues in real societies and that it envisages real options for real people. This approach inevitably generates conflicts with those forces, within and without our countries, which are defending *status quo* as a way of life and immobility as a way of being. But, at the same time, our experience shows that there are progressive individuals and groups, in both the Third World and the industrialized countries, who share many common ideals and who are prepared to work together to achieve them. This mutual understanding at the non-governmental level—over and above the North-South dichotomy—is proving to be an important component of present international relations. In this approach to our academic activities, ILET is part of a large and expanding network of Third World social scientists and institutions.

If I have dwelt a little too long on the general orientation of our work, it is simply to emphasize that we believe that such development and change is first and foremost the responsibility of Third World peoples. The present situation is not the result of a conscious conspiracy by the industrialized countries to dominate and exploit us; it is the result of a historical process in which the interest of our ruling classes to continue in a situation of dependence has gone hand in hand with the colonial and transnational forces that have strongly influenced our political, economic and cultural models.

This structural evolution has generated a system of international relations, in which most Third World countries are contained, whose rationale inevitably favors the industrialized countries. The rules and practices in the field of international trade, financial and monetary affairs, technology, transport, services and many other areas are characterized by a wide and expanding disequilibrium between industrialized and Third World countries, with very few exceptions to this trend.

The international community has recognized this fact and has acknowledged the need for a new international economic order that insures equality of opportunities for Third World countries in the distribution of benefits derived from international development and growth. Several negotiations are now under way whose declared intentions are to achieve this objective. There is also a growing awareness that such changes are, in the long run, in the interests of both developed and developing countries.

It is in this context that the issue of international communications and Third World participation should be analyzed. As in economic matters, there is also a wide disequilibrium in the flow of international communications between industrialized countries and the Third World. The existing transnational communications system is a whole: it includes news

agencies, advertising enterprises and data banks, as well as information-retrieval systems, radio and television programmes, movies, radio-photographs, magazines, books and "comics" with international circulations, together with the hard- and soft-ware technologies that underpin their development. Its different components, which originate mainly in the industrialized countries, reinforce each other, stimulating the consumers' aspirations to forms of social organization and life styles imitative of industrialized, market-economy countries, which, as experience has shown, can only be attained in the Third World on the basis of a high and growing concentration of income in a few hands and unacceptable social inequalities. This overview is important, because attention has mainly been focused on the disequilibrium in news flows, and it should be emphasized that the structural situation goes over and beyond that particular aspect.

The evidence

With respect to news flows proper, the conceptual considerations and practical proposals that I have submitted to this seminar* are based on hard facts and serious empirical work undertaken by ILET researchers. I should like to advance some data from ongoing research at ILET which underscores some of the problems we see in the present structure of news flows.

Firstly, there is a mainly unidirectional flow from the industrialized countries towards the Third World. For example, a survey of 16 Latin American newspapers during a four-day period in November 1975 shows that 80 % of the international information they published originated in UPI, AP, Reuters and Agence France Presse. On the other hand, the reverse flow is practically non-existent. Moreover, of the material transmitted by the agencies about the Third World to their own public in the industrialized countries, a very small fraction is actually used by television, newspapers and radio. For example, a survey of 108 evening news programmes transmitted by three principal United States television networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) shows that, of the total coverage, only 20 % was dedicated to international news and, of these, only 2.1 % referred to Latin America. This amounted to 11 minutes, out of a total transmission time of about 54 hours, to cover information about more than 25 countries and more than 300 million people.

Secondly, there is a tendency to concentrate on subjects of interest to the preponderant markets of the agencies. For example, in a study made of the coverage by international news agencies of the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Colombo in August 1976, 50 % of all dispatches sent by UPI mentioned the subject of Korea, while only around 1 % of the text of the final Declaration of the Conference was devoted to this issue. There is an evident lack of relationship between the relative importance of the subject within the meeting and the image transmitted by the agency.

Thirdly, the present communications structure is a vehicle for transmitting a transnational cultural pattern alien to local realities. For example, in an investigation of 25 women's magazines in five Latin American countries during a two-month period in 1976, the advertising of transnational enterprices in each magazine represented from 60 % to 90 % of

* Third World Participation in International Communications. Perspectives after Nairobi: Conceptual Considerations and Practical Proposals.

the total advertising outlay, stimulating inadequate consumption patterns if compared with the efforts necessary to satisfy basic human needs.

Fourthly, the nature of the reporting sometimes creates alarm and despondency and presents Third World aspirations for change as a threat to the development of industrialized countries. For example, UPI filed the following dispatch on 27 February 1974:

'New York, February 27 (UPI). A meeting of a number of the main bauxite-producing countries, scheduled tentatively for March 5 in Conakry (Guinea), has caused understandable concern in Washington. Some experts feel that the conference could be the first step in the establishment of a series of international cartels for controlling raw materials essential to the industrialized nations, which could set the United States' economy back more than 40 years.'

The least that can be said is that such reporting greatly exaggerates the implications of the efforts to stabilize the market for commodities exported by Third World countries.

Fifthly, there is a tendency to reflect negatively the efforts of progressive individuals, social groups or governments which promote structural change in Third World societies. For example, in August 1976, some 40 bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic Church, participating in a meeting to discuss the conditions of their evangelical work in the present Latin American context, were expelled from the country in which the meeting was taking place. In reporting on this event, semantics played an important role. The meeting was described as 'strange', their entry as 'surreptitious', the churchmen themselves as 'red', 'Marxist' or 'Communist',—language which reflected much more the official reasons given by the military government for their expulsion than the reactions and responses of the bishops to the legitimate nature of their ecumenical gathering.

Such empirical evidence gives rise to the concern voiced in many Third World quarters. On the other hand, there are already a number of media and journalists who are honestly and fruitfully trying to modify the situation by giving a much more accurate and balanced presentation of events. We are not dealing with a totally black and white issue in which a Manichaean approach is possible.

The reactions

It is this sort of background which has moved many research institutions in the Third World to advance the idea of a New International Information Order, as an important component of the changes that are under way in the present international system. We have noted that in the European context the words 'new order' rightfully conjure up memories and images of European Fascism. We understand such a psychological reaction, among other reasons, because many Latin Americans are today engaged in a struggle for liberty and democracy and against Fascism in their own societies. I can only hope that the solidarity with this struggle of those who appeal to the memories of the 30's and 40's will be as strong and committed as their opposition to changes in the present information order.

On the other hand, it is worth noting how this problem is seen in other circles. The report entitled 'Reshaping the International Order', which was inspired and coordinated by the eminent Nobel Prize-winner Jan Tinbergen, has this to say:

'Public opinion in the industrialized countries will

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not have real access to full information on the Third World, its demands, aspirations and needs, until such time as information and communication patterns are liberated from the market-oriented sensationalism and news presentation which characterize them at present and until they are consciously stripped of ethnocentric prejudices. The widening of the capacity to inform must be viewed as an essential component of attempts to create a new international order and, as such, the monopolistic and discriminatory practices inherent in current international information dissemination must be deemed as one of the worst, though subtle, characteristics of the present system ... That there is a need for reform is obvious.'

Nonetheless, those who advocate changes in the present international information order are continually and systematically presented as exclusively oriented towards radically eliminating certain existing freedoms and principles in international information. For this reason, I wish to establish very clearly our position.

In the framework of the present international communication structures, the way in which the principles of the free flow of information has been applied generates—in practice—a mainly unidirectional flow from western industrialized countries to the Third World. This does not mean, nor do we postulate it, that the principle itself should be rejected, but it does mean, however, that the manner in which it has been applied has led to serious imbalances among countries and cultures. What is required is the practical application of a *truly free flow*, that is, a multidirectional and multidimensional flow. To achieve this, it is not enough to just proclaim the validity of a principle; it is equally necessary that all countries should have real access to and participation in the flows. In the present structure, this does not occur.

There is no intention to *eliminate* the existing international information media, but rather to create the conditions for the emergence of alternative and complementary channels of information. This implies acceptance of the fact that the perception of what is news prevalent in the present western information models, does not necessarily correspond to the real development needs of Third World countries, nor can it always reflect faithfully the social contexts and conflicts in which events become news. This points to the need for creating information channels based in the Third World. This requires efficiency and competent professionals with management skills, who are capable of presenting Third World events and their own points of view in an attractive and, above all, comprehensible fashion. It also requires hard work and dedication and is essentially a Third World responsibility.

The movement towards a new international information order does not mean fostering government control over international information. Nor do we believe that the preponderant influence of private economic and commercial interests over present flows can insure adequate information. The exercise of freedom of information by international media, which implies the possibility of critical analysis, positive or negative, must be recognized. At the same time, the media must accept that this right ought to be exercised with responsibility and be subject to questioning and evaluation by the community in which they operate, which may also lead to a critical analysis, positive or negative, of the manner in which they exercise the social function of information. The search for an adequate relationship between right and responsibility is simply a reflection in the field of information of the way in which societies are organized in other aspects of their social life.

Furthermore, this subject is directly related to the ongoing debate in some industrialized countries—particularly France and the United States—on the implications of increasing concentration of press ownership. *U.S. News and World Report*, in an article titled "America's press: too much power for too few?", describes these issues in the following terms: 'There is growing concern that the publishing business, long considered essential to an informed citizenry, is losing its diversity and that growth of corporate empires in publishing is making 'the bottom line' of profit margins the supreme factor in the industry—to the detriment of excellence and responsibility to the public'.

The road ahead

All these considerations highlight the need for international communications to respond to the individual and collective need to understand events and thus to allow an informed participation in the social process. It can and should make real cultural interaction between different societies possible and serve to promote international understanding, recognizing that information is a basic need, both for individuals and societies, and one of the fundamental human rights. Information structures have become *de facto* part of the educational process in contemporary societies and, as such, perform a public service and a social function that carries with it rights as well as responsibilities.

The aforementioned elements lead us to conceive of richer and more creative forms of international communications for all societies. The objective is to move forward from a unidirectional to a multidirectional structure; from an ethnocentric to a culturally pluralistic and multidimensional perspective; from the receiver's passivity to an active participation; from the preponderant transnational influence to a multinational balance; all of it on the basis of structures that permit true access and generalized social participation in the communication process.

The mere enunciation of these issues indicates that this is not an easy subject. It touches on questions that constitute the backbone of values and principles on which contemporary western societies have been built. It deals with matters closely linked to the nature of the development process in different societies. It goes into areas in which there are different ideological and political approaches. Finally, it is a subject around which discussions up to now have been highly emotional. It may be more comfortable to close our minds to these difficult issues and to dismiss them as yet another rhetorical and unrealistic demand coming from the always troublesome Third World. But I believe that this challenge cannot be put off simply because it may imply adjustments in the present situation of the international communications structures. In order to avoid the inevitable tensions that this attitude leads to, it seems necessary to recognize the legitimacy of the demands for change and to concentrate on the conceptual and practical aspects of how international communications can best serve the interests of all people.

That is why we believe that a serious, reasoned and unemotional discussion, with the participation of journalists, editors, academics and people employed by governments, may be useful in clarifying the issues, in creating a better understanding of the different ideas involved and, we hope, in providing orientations with respect to areas of possible agreement. By its pluralistic composition, the

seminar reflects the various elements involved:

1. The theoretical approach, as expressed in scientific analysis, which recognizes in conceptual developments a fundamental component in the advance of societies, ascribing to the universities their role as the social conscience of the society in which they exist by posing the problems of the present and the future.
2. The professional experience, reflected in the journalists and editors, who are the backbone of the information process and whose knowledge, experience and attitudes are essential for a meaningful discussion of these issues.
3. The political dimension that the subject has acquired, particularly in the context of the positions taken by the non-aligned countries and the agreements and discussions within UNESCO, which has been the main forum in which this subject has been discussed by governments at the international level.

ILET believes that dialogue is possible on these issues and that such dialogue can take place by acknowledging cultural pluralism and diversity. The international community comprises many cultures with various origins and characteristics; each has its own rationale and is the product of different processes of social mixture and historical evolution. A basic principle of international understanding should be the respect for other cultures and the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of 'the other', be it an individual or a society. Cultural diversity is a treasure to be defended and not a defect to be removed. This is particularly important because one cannot forget that —in historical perspective—those peoples who today are called underdeveloped are the same peoples who have forged some of the most important civilizations known to mankind. It is also relevant because the human experience of living in societies which are dependent cannot easily be felt through books, statistics and cold analysis.

This is why the Netherlands is an appropriate setting for our discussions. Its tradition of pluralism and enlightened understanding of the needs and aspirations of Third World peoples, as expressed through its development-cooperation policies, give us an adequate framework for our debates.

The dimensions and implications of the problems set forth lead us to conclude that the central question before us is not whether there will or will not be changes in the present structure of international communications, but rather what changes there will be and how they will be implemented. It is impossible to remain static; it is most dangerous to deny the existence of the problem. It is necessary to determine what can be done. We believe that reasoned discussions and the exchange of opinions respecting the others' viewpoints are viable. We believe that there are possible initial solutions to show the will for change and understanding. We have proposed some; no doubt there are others. The final mistake would be to reject dialogue, because the vacuum left by imcomprehension would be peopled by confrontations, recriminations and unilateral measures that would affect all and benefit none. It is in this spirit that this seminar has been convened. Although organized by ILET, in the end it will be your seminar. It will be your contributions and discussions—as formal participants and observers—that will constitute the basis of our endeavors.

Some publications of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

Mass Education. Studies in Adult Education and Teaching by Correspondence in Some Developing Countries. Edited by Lars-Olof Edström, Renée Erdos and Roy Prosser. Uppsala, 1970. 379 pp.
Price: 68 Sw.kr.

Sovereignty, Aggression and Neutrality. Three lectures by Hans Blix. Uppsala, 1970. 64 pp.
Price: 21.25 Sw.kr.

The Image of the Developing Countries: An Inquiry into Swedish Public Opinion. By Stig Lindholm. Uppsala, 1971. 100 pp.
Price: 21.25 Sw.kr.

Nutrition: A Priority in African Development. Edited by Bo Vahlquist. Uppsala, 1972. 228 pp.
Price: 51 Sw.kr.

Technical Assistance Administration in East Africa. Edited by Yashpal Tandon. Uppsala, 1973. 212 pp.
Price: 29.75 Sw.kr.

The Treaty Maker's Handbook. Edited by Hans Blix and Jirina H. Emerson. Uppsala, 1973. 355 pp.
Price: 90 Sw.kr.

Appointment with the Third World. Experts and Volunteers in the Field: Their Work, Life and Thoughts. By Stig Lindholm. Uppsala, 1974. 144 pp.
Price: 25.50 Sw.kr.

Report from Swaneng Hill. Education and Employment in an African Country. By Patrick van Rensburg. Uppsala, 1974. 235 pp. Price: 20 Sw.kr. (UK and Commonwealth only: Wildwood House Ltd, 29 King Street, London WC2E 8JD.
Price: £1.95)

Outer Limits and Human Needs: Resource and Environmental Issues of Development Strategies. Edited by William H. Matthews. Uppsala, 1976. 102 pp.
Price: 45 Sw.kr.

The above publications may be ordered from Almqvist & Wiksell, P. O. Box 62, S-101 20 Stockholm. The publications below are available only from the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation direct:

The Story of a Seminar in Applied Communication. Edited by Andreas Fuglesang. Uppsala, 1973. 142 pp.
Price: air mail 35 Sw.kr., surface mail 25 Sw.kr.

Applied Communication in Developing Countries. By Andreas Fuglesang. Uppsala, 1973. 124 pp.
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Film-making in Developing Countries 1: The Uppsala Workshop. Edited by Andreas Fuglesang. Uppsala, 1975. 123 pp.
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Film-making in Developing Countries 2: Highlights from a Film Workshop. Executive producer: Bo-Erik Gyberg. 16 mm b&w film, 16 minutes.
Price: 500 Sw.kr.

Another Development: Approaches and Strategies. Edited by Marc Nerfin with contributions by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Krishna Ahooja-Patel, Jacques Berthelot, Johan Galtung, Paul Singer and Bolivar Lamounier, Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantara, Rajni Kothari, Sergio Bitar, Ahmed Ben Salah. Uppsala, 1977. 265 pp.
Price: air mail 90 Sw.kr., surface mail 80 Sw.kr.

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